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OSCAR MONTAGUE—PARANOIAC

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OSCAR MONTAGUE—PARANOIAC

By GEORGE L. WALTON, M.D.

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"HE HYPNOTIZED ME, D—N HIM!

OSCAR MONTAGUE—PARANOIAC

BY

GEORGE LINCOLN WALTON

Author of "Why Worry," "Those Nerves," "Peg Along," etc.

Fret not thy Gizzard; muzzle
thy Spleen, and set thy Heart
on no one Thing—
Laou-tsze

WITH A FRONTISPIECE BY

H. WESTON TAYLOR

PHILADELPHIA & LONDON
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY
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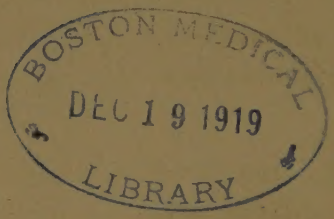

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PREFACE

THE following tale is an attempt to portray in narrative form some of the mental traits with which I have previously dealt in less consecutive fashion. The susceptibility of these traits to improvement, and their legal bearing, also have been considered.

To forestall the possible suggestion that real individuals are depicted, it is fair to state that, while many ideas have been suggested by actualities (as most ideas are), the pictures are composite and the characters fictitious.

In case, again, some student of the philosophers should discover that Laou-tsze, though he taught tranquillity, control of the passions and renunciation of the ties of life, never alluded to either of the viscera mentioned on the title page, it should be stated that I translated this myself. If the translation is too free, it is because I do not know Chinese.

G. L. W.

BOSTON, 1919

CHARACTERS

OSCAR MONTAGUE, the paranoiac. A victim of environmental dislocation.

RUTH MONTAGUE, his mother. A worrier.

GERROLD MONTAGUE, his father. A degenerate scion.

HELEN, his sister. The redeeming feature.

MRS. CROSBY, her mentor.

AUNT SALLY, her model.

AUNT ELLEN, just Aunt Ellen.

FRED, Helen's admirer.

FREDERICK NEWCOMB, SENIOR, Fred's father. A somewhat heavy-headed, but well meaning member of the legal profession.

THE COUNT, man about town. A trouble maker.

NICKY BENNETT, the conspirator.

OTHERS, more or less important. Including lawyers, doctors, bankers, hotel guests and villagers.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	Oscar Montague and His Mother	11
II	How It Came to Pass	24
III	On the Other Side of the Railroad	37
IV	Helen Studies Botany: Oscar Comparative Anatomy	52
V	Mr. Montague Starts Something	67
VI	The Consultation	77
VII	Introduces Mrs. Crosby and Seriously Sarah	100
VIII	Mrs. Crosby Soliloquizes	122
IX	Helen Learns to Love a Yellow Car	136
X	Another Consultation	150
XI	The Count	162
XII	The Hidden Graveyard	177
XIII	The Selectman Does His Duty	195
XIV	The Inquest	213
XV	The Silver Matchbox	227
XVI	Back at Southfield	249
XVII	An Expert in Criminal Jurisprudence	261
XVIII	The Question of a License to Kill	277
XIX	Mr. Marchmont's Story	284
XX	In Conclusion	303

OSCAR MONTAGUE—PARANOIAC

EDUCATIONAL

CHAPTER I

OSCAR MONTAGUE AND HIS MOTHER

Oscar Montague was queer; bright, yes, but queer. Acutely reactive to slight and criticism, it looked as if he would become, like his mother, a martyr to self-imposed misfortune. But the case was more complicated, as was early evident. His mother's sensitiveness meant self-effacement; she recoiled from criticism because she feared people were discovering her inferiority. Oscar's sensitiveness was the kind that goes with a chip on the shoulder; he resented criticism because it implied that people failed to recognize his superiority. Confidence was the keynote of his conduct. His mother could not enjoy

herself unless sure that she was doing everything right. Oscar did not care whether he did things right or wrong, so long as he *was* enjoying himself. His mother was anxious to please others—he wanted others to please him. It is no exaggeration to say that these differences were fundamental.

Oscar's mother was worried about him. It was nothing new for Mrs. Montague to worry, but it was not every day that she worried about something tangible. Her worries were prone to take indefinite form. One of her favorite worries was that she feared she was not at one with the creative principle. That was not tangible. You could not touch it. Oscar you could touch. If you did, he would curl up like a sensitive plant, but you could touch him. His methods were roundabout. He was early given to evasion without adequate incentive, thus:

"Have you taken your bath this morning?" asked his mother, as she wrung out her

own wash-cloth and spread it over two slats so that it would dry quickly.

"Not all over, mother."

"Have you washed your face and hands?" she pursued, eying him sternly.

"Not yet!"

This at the age of six. So elaborately foolish, too. If he had said yes to both questions, all would have been well, and peace of mind preserved for both. A boy who will do a thing like that at six, when he becomes bank president will juggle tax returns.

> Thus early in the game he was a villain,
> And now to do such deeds he still is willin'.

To be sure he may never be bank president, but he must be taken in hand just the same. This was something like taking in hand a globule of mercury—he slipped through her fingers. So she temporized—in other words, alternately scolded and cajoled him—and while she temporized, he grew up.

Quite early in life he decided that evil influences were opposing him. Given to introspection—keen on self-analysis and the causes of things—he concluded that the marked, if malevolent, attention of which he was the object was a tribute to his greatness; envy was at the bottom of the universal tendency to underrate and injure him. So, out of sensitiveness was developed arrogance. This was not at the age of six; precocious he was, to be sure, but this line of argument could not have developed much before the age of eight—if then.

He was not much older than this when he took up smoking. Sweet fern, of course, but smoking. When this came to his mother's ears, she said she would rather see him in his grave. This was a manner of speech with Mrs. Montague. To her, Death had no Sting, and the Victory of the Grave was always with her.

"I could kill whoever invented sweet

fern," she exclaimed in a spasm of rage that empurpled her visage and marred the symmetry of her ordinarily not unattractive features.

This would seem to imply that her homicidal tendencies were unlimited, but it only meant that the smell of anything burning was distasteful to her. Not that this form of speech was unique. It would probably be no exaggeration to say that during the past few years, many thousand people have said aloud, and many million to themselves, "I could kill the Kaiser!" But it is equally safe to affirm that if said Kaiser were bound and gagged and placed upon the floor of their composite drawing-room, and a duly whetted dagger placed in their composite hand, an outsider who listened very keenly would hear their composite voice murmer very softly, "Let George do it." In other words, they couldn't kill the Kaiser. Perhaps, indeed, some of them would send him orchids.

Most of us shrink from doing personal damage, even when it does not entail danger to ourselves. When it does we more than shrink—we shrivel. At least we did before the war. Then we were steeped in safety and wanted the lid sat on. The horrors of war have something to their credit, amongst them a certain modification of our attitude toward danger. But if the germ-plasm from which springs the human race is made up of the elements of the animal kingdom, the sheep has contributed her share.

In respect of actuality, Mrs. Montague was all sheep, although she sometimes roared as does the king of beasts. Like the warlike denizens of eastern lands in olden times, she sometimes donned a mask of incarnate ferocity. Indeed, she did this so often that she finally lost sight of its significance. Perhaps she only saw the lining. If she ever used the mirror to adjust her mental traits it could hardly have been when she wore the mask, or she would have discarded it at once.

Oscar was a handsome young devil, even with the defiant sidewise glance of the black eyes, and the habitual distortion of his regular features into something that was not exactly a scowl, nor yet a sneer, but that conveyed the impression of both. His mother was not concerned about the scowl. She regarded his sullen moods and arrogant ways somewhat in the light of growing pains. Indeed, she never quite got over the feeling of wonder that she had produced a living thing that was growing up into any kind of a man at all. That she had previously produced a daughter did not impress her as remarkable.

Worried she was because Oscar did not respond to her protestations of affection. The advances of her daughter Helen did not greatly interest her. Indeed, they rather caused annoyance by emphasizing the hiatus. That Oscar showed her too little respect she regarded as a matter of course. She gloried in her humility. " What am I," she would

reason, " that he should stand up when I do? Or that he should say, ' Please, mother,' when he wants anything." The question of politeness and respect for elders she thus reduced to a matter of personal relation between them. The incentive to general good behavior as set forth by her was on a similar basis.

" If you don't wash behind your ears mummy will cry," had been the plea with which, when he was little, she had fortified her insistence upon cleanliness. When he didn't wash there she would carry out her threat, and think he must be sorry.

That a little systematic training might be useful did not occur to her, although she disciplined her daughter Helen thoroughly, albeit in a fitful and inconsiderate manner. Her favorite method of procedure in Helen's case was to ask her to do something. If she did not do it " on the dot," her mother would do it herself with an aggrieved air and as-

sumption of discomfort that seemed to say, "Now see what you've done!" The idea was to make Helen sorry, whereas it only irritated her. Oscar was much too thick-skinned—or too heedless—to take such treatment to heart. In any event, it is doubtful if this or any other form of discipline would materially have benefited Oscar. He was a law unto himself.

Thus far we have mingled the personalities of mother and son. And this is meet, for their lives were closely interwoven.

She had an obsession for cleanliness and order. His specialty was mischief-making. That was not an obsession. An obsession implies mentality, sometimes of superior sort. This tendency of Oscar's was an elemental force—more like the expansion of gas in a cylinder. It made the wheels go round. An obsession sometimes makes the wheels go round, but quite as often clogs them with a scruple. A picture askew irritated her like

a cinder in the eye; though the minister himself were thundering at the knocker, he must possess himself in patience till the picture was in plumb.

When Oscar was young it was a procession—Mrs. Montague going about the house straightening things just two laps behind Oscar, who romped on ahead making them crooked. When he was older it was a runaway—she plodding along behind, halter in hand and tears on cheek, her one object in life to see him decorously browsing in pastures fenced about by her ideals—he galloping off ahead, overturning apple carts, frightening pedestrians and otherwise carrying on in a most unseemly manner. If she wept tears of anguish when he smoked sweet fern, her grief became superlative when one day, in the course of her morning marketing, she saw him sitting on the fence of the village Green, smoking a still stronger product of

Connecticut soil, his companions now the leading terrors of the town.

She begged, she implored him to desist. She went to his room after he had retired that night and sat on his bed for hours, weeping and praying. "You care more for that filthy weed than for your mother," was her reproach. "Promise, oh promise me that you will give it up."

Oscar, besides being irked—as he had a right to be—by having his bed sat on while he was in it, was never moved to sympathy by tears—rather to anger. Moreover, he was sufficiently logical to recognize the *non sequitur* in his mother's argument. So he refused to promise, and she retired to weep and pray alone. Sometime after midnight it occurred to her that if she threw more pathos into her plea it might yet prove effective, so she crept again into Oscar's room.

"Who's there?" he shouted.

The hum of conversation always soothed

him to slumber, but a whisper would send him broad awake. There are many such; they can sleep through pandemonium, but stealthy noises wake them up. (Burglars please take notice.)

"It's only your mother," was the modest answer.

"What's the matter?"

"I thought perhaps you didn't realize how much it means to me to have you smoke. I have set my heart on having you grow up a big, strong, upright man, and if you smoke you will be a shriveled up, mean specimen of whom I shall be ashamed. And smoking leads to evils even worse." So on for an hour. Oscar dozed and awoke at intervals. At last he said:

"All right, mother, since you insist, I promise."

"Bless you, my boy," she murmured, and implanted a moist kiss, which was endured.

The next forenoon she saw him sitting on

the same fence with a big invincible protruding from his mouth at an angle of forty-five degrees. This was the climax. This time she did not implore. She frankly scolded. Such language from his mother's lips he had never heard. The words were nothing new to him, but that they were in her vocabulary he could not credit.

But it is high time our characters were endowed with local habitation, clothing, weather, and other accessories of a well-ordered tale, instead of gyrating in a vacuum with nothing on but a few mental attributes.

CHAPTER II

HOW IT CAME TO PASS

If Mrs. Montague (then Ruth Fulton) hadn't had a headache that morning all this wouldn't have happened; at least she used to say so. Of course, something a great deal worse might have happened, but Ruth was not the one to realize that. She was not given to that sort of philosophy. A large part of her time was taken up in dwelling with painful insistence, on the might-have-been. When her troubled thoughts did agitate themselves up to the present they rarely stopped there, but rushed on, to contemplate, with anxious fears, the evils of tomorrow.

However that may be, Ruth Fulton did wake up on that November morning—in the early nineties—with a headache. It was one

of those boring, pounding, " pressure " headaches. She had dreamt that her head was in a vise, that it was an anvil, and that it was being bored for an artesian well, for all of which the dream book doubtless has an ingenious explanation, but which really meant that she had a headache. She snapped on the light and pulled the bell-cord.

" Here are two letters for you, Miss Ruth," announced the maid who answered her ring.

" Thank you, Annie, and start the fire, please." A martyr at the stake could not have given the order to put torch to faggot with a more resigned and patient voice.

" Shall I raise the curtains? " asked Annie, as she rose from the hearth, and brushed a few imaginary ashes from her apron.

" No, I have one of my *awful* headaches."

" Can I do anything for you? " Annie inquired solicitously, as she carefully laid a

rose-colored wrapper on the chair by the bedside.

"No, and I sha'n't want any breakfast. I'll ring if I wish anything—or wait, won't you set the clock, and start it. What time is it, anyway?"

"Half-past ten, Miss Ruth."

"Then it's right for once. That's the time I went to bed." Ruth could not sleep a wink with a clock ticking in the room, nor could she spare it in the daytime. So she compromised by stopping it every night and starting it in the morning.

"That's all, Annie, now you may go," and she languidly draped the wrapper about her shoulders, tucked a pillow behind her back, and inspected her letters. One of them was written in a rather crabbed hand on business paper, headed

OLDCASTLE AND NEWCOMB
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
SOUTHFIELD, CONN.

The other was written on thick paper of a superior grade, with a square envelope to match. She opened the former, saying to herself:

"There, I thought Fred would apologize for treating me so badly last night. I'll be over good to him today, for I believe I was half wrong myself. But he *was* so superior!"

And this was what, with parenthetical comments, she deciphered:

My Dear Girl: ("I like that!")

There is a certain subject I have wished to broach for some time, but have hesitated on account of your sensitiveness to criticism. ("Well of all the—me sensitive to criticism!") But we shall have to discuss such subjects after we are married, and it seems necessary to begin. What I refer to is this. You said several times this evening that you would dance with Gerrold Montague, and as many times changed your mind because you thought I might not like it, though I had said that I did not care. Finally, when Gerrold gave it up you said you were just on the point of dancing with him, nobody understood you, nobody wanted you around, and you must go home—I could stay if I wanted to. ("The old fool!")

Now it would not take much more of this fretting over trifles to use up all the time in which we should be enjoying ourselves, to say nothing of doing some good in the world. ("I can hear him smack his lips").

Do not think from this that I do not love you. It is because I do that I speak of it. Can we not resolve to adopt a different attitude toward things? I can get off early tomorrow afternoon, and will be round at three.

Yours as ever,

FREDERICK.

As Ruth read this letter the lines between her eyes deepened and her head thumped harder than ever. She tossed it back on the table and picked up the other. It ran like this:

DARLING RUTH:

Don't think because you have worn his ring six months you have got to marry a prig. Just say you will marry one who understands you and is going to do big things in the world. I will be round with the span at three.

GERROLD.

Still holding this letter in her hand she arose, went to her desk, wrote a few lines on

a half sheet of paper, and addressed an envelope.

"I'll show him I can make up my mind for once," she said, and rang the bell. "Give this to John to mail right away," she ordered, and went to the window to draw the dark green shade—for light, as well as sound, in her case, precluded sleep.

The sunlight streamed in, its cheerful effect only enhanced by the high elm branches that diffused its glow. The heavily mote-laden sunbeams lit up the red roses and green grapevines of the tapestry carpet which had been demoted from the parlor in favor of the Wilton (more in keeping with the Roger's group) into which one luxuriously sank. A Sherlock Holmes familiar with Ruth's ways could have identified that tapestry carpet in China by the suggestion of wear up and down the middle, and the fainter one that beat the boundaries. So plain were the evidences of Ruth's restless rambles.

Either the sunlight, or the crackling of the fire—now taking the chill from the room—seemed suddenly to turn the channel of her thoughts. "What have I done!" she exclaimed in a panic, and circuited the room pulling at her fingers. "I must get that letter back—but it's at the office by now, and that cat of a postmistress has read the address—it will be all over town that I have written to Gerrold Montague and tried to get the letter back. I shall be a laughing-stock. But it mustn't go. Oh, dear! How can I decide anything with my head aching like this!" So, in lieu of a decision, the letter went, and its delivery settled the most important question of her life.

The young woman who thus, on the spur of the moment, gave up a safe, if humdrum, future, to throw in her lot with the black sheep of the town was the daughter of Southfield's leading citizen. Besides occupying other positions of responsibility and emolument,

Seth Fulton was president of the First National Bank, at that time modestly placed in the middle of Loomis's Block, between Atherton's dry goods store and the post office, but now, as everybody knows, occupying an imposing (one-story) building of its own on the other side of the Square.

The ancestral mansion was of Greco-Colonial structure, painted white. In front, supporting a very flat A of a roof, towered four columns, their flutings more or less obscured by woodbine. A path of flag led to the side (used as a front) door, dark green, surmounted by a fan window, and protected by a trellis which bore on one side a stout wistaria, on the other a hardy rose, to take up, in its turn, the burden of bloom. There was a scraper on the step. The trellis was fashioned in the likeness of a grape-vine, being a relic of bygone days, like the dog on the lawn, who, with uplifted paw, pointed in all weathers at nothing wilder than the

English sparrows, who twittered all over his field of vision, and sometimes lit upon his nose. A hydrangea shared the lawn with the dog, and was the only shrub in view except the white-lilac bush on one side of the entrance, obviously the remains of a hedge that formerly insured a privacy long since out of fashion.

Whatever privacy the premises afforded was found in the garden at the back, in the farthest corner of which stood a summer-house of lattice-work, almost hidden by a Delaware-grape vine. The gravel walks were bordered by white alyssum and yellow sanvitalia, and the beds presented an array of old-fashioned flowers merely suggested in November by the bent and faded spikes of larkspur, and a few forlorn perennials. A row of hollyhocks, in their season, lined the wall that separated the Fultons from the Newcombs. In this wall (of brown stucco, with irregular patches of brick showing

through) was an arch, with a low gate by which the families could communicate.

This hospitable home was set, along with those of the gentry in general, well back on the sunny side of Elm Street, an imposing West Side avenue with two roadways separated by a strip of grass plot which extended the whole of its aristocratic length. The street was shaded by the magnificent trees from which it was named, trees surpassed in girth and spread of foliage only by the one in the middle of Deacon Smith's front lawn, which was said to be as old as the town itself, and Southfield had celebrated its two hundred and fiftieth anniversary when Ruth was attending the Academy.

When Ruth's love affairs came up for discussion, as they frequently did at church suppers and elsewhere, her chums did not hesitate to intimate that it was the banker's daughter, rather than the girl to whom the attentions of her suitors were addressed. But whether

Fred Newcomb and Gerrold Montague were influenced by the parental status or not, even the envious had to acknowledge that she had a certain charm, notwithstanding the suggestion of perpetual frown that curved the inner ends of her eyebrows, and drew lines between them. The eyes themselves were large, grey-green, in some lights blue; the nose was straight, the chin well rounded, belying the undecided droop of the corners of the mouth, and the generally appealing expression of the face, that seemed to say, " Please don't judge me too harshly, I am doing the best I can." The forehead was high and square, and the free carriage of the head was accentuated by the simple way in which she did her hair. She was rather slender, upright with a springing gait that drew attention to a pair of trim feet, not quite deformed by the tight shoes of the day.

It should be added that the gait was not always springing, for every now and then

an insistent doubt would bring her to a sudden stop, perhaps make her retrace her steps, only to continue on her former course. This evolution might be repeated a dozen times, and it was not unusual for a neighbor to summon the family to the front window with, "Come on, girls, if you want to see one of Ruth Fulton's funny fits!"

About some things she had no manner of doubt. For example, there was the matter of going upstairs. If, by any inadvertence, she had begun with the left foot, or if she was in doubt with which one she had begun, she must go back and start all over again. This combination of determination and doubt was not altogether illogical after all, inasmuch as her usual indecision arose from an overweening insistence on doing the right thing. In the matter of the stairs, the right thing was in some mysterious way preordained.

If the reader has gathered the idea that Ruth Fulton was altogether an incapable,

the narrator has missed his mark. When she made up her mind to do anything—and once in a while she did this with startling rapidity—the thing was as good as done. It must be conceded that her efficiency was not always to be relied upon in time of stress, for the occasion most urgently demanding prompt decision and definite action generally ushered in one of her "heart attacks." On a smaller scale it was as if some structurally perfect building, let us say Westminster Abbey, on the appearance of a dark cloud, should suddenly cry out, "Oh, oh, I feel very weak in my corner-stone!" and drop in a heap.

This environment, and this personality were so far from suggesting life-long unhappiness, interrupted only by tragic incident, that perhaps Ruth was not to blame for attributing to the headache all that followed.

CHAPTER III

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RAILROAD

Most towns, like most garments, have a right and wrong side. Sometimes the dividing line (in the case of the town) is a railroad; again it is a river, again it is both. Sometimes it is something less tangible, but more potent, than either a railroad or a river, namely, an idea. The canny student of real estate is sometimes able at the dawning of a settlement to foretell which way the sun of midday opulence will shine. In that event he acquires a fortune. Sometimes the best laid plans are foiled and he acquires what theatregoers call the hook, past participle of which is hock, easier to get into, we are told, than out of.

Be that as it may, the dividing line in Southfield was both a river and a railroad.

The early settlers made the mistake of thinking that East Side would be the final seat of fashion. This hope was futile, perhaps simply because the prevailing tendency of towns and men was westward in those days. The most promising feature of East Side was the conformation—what geographers call the profile—of the land. West Side, until you reached the rise beyond the valley, was flat as the proverbial pancake, or even flatter, say, flat as the pan itself. East Side was anything but that.

Starting—as most people of condition nowadays do—from West Side (say from the Green, where Elm Street meets Main at a right angle) and following Main Street toward the station, we come, in fifteen minutes (unless we have stopped to admire Atherton's life-like figure of a lady in pink evening gown) to the river—a nice, deep, black and oily river. In the middle of the bridge which spans it we must stop to look

over at the dam below. This is largely a natural dam—of limestone—and changes the river from deep, black and oily to shallow, white and foamy. Perhaps we shall see the log, jammed firmly in the crevices of the stone, and slippery with spray, upon which Oscar crawled one day in furtherance of a "stump" by Nicky Bennett. It took the Hook and Ladder some time to rescue him, though half the town was looking on and offering suggestions. Many passengers missed the train that day to give advice.

Continuing across the bridge, on which we have lingered longer than we intended, we pass the station on the left, crossing, meantime, the railroad tracks, which follow the windings of the river. These tracks nearly fill the level, and Main Street, after crossing them, rises abruptly to pursue its way over undulating country. Upon the hills are perched, not the gorgeous villas and artistic eyries pictured by the optimists, but

the dwellings of railway employees, raisers of garden truck and the like, with here and there a more pretentious effort, say, the house of the station master and that of the principal of the grammar school. In one of the more pretentious dwelt Gerrold Montague and his sister Ellen. The house was one of Gerrold's first ventures in real estate, occupied by him with a view to making it more attractive than if it stood with drawn shades and bore the familiar sign "For Sale," which makes the average passerby say, "Why?" But the net had failed to secure the fish. It was to this house (on the corner of Prospect and Spring Streets) that Gerrold led his bride.

The choice of residence had been determined partly by the scarcity of desirable homes available on West Side, and partly because Gerrold's interests were centred in that quarter. It was some time later that they broadened to include Main Street Livery Stable, the pride of which was the

span of thoroughbreds Gerrold used himself. Regarding occupants of the other stalls the less said the better, excepting that they furnished motive power for the bus that ran from the station via Main Street to the Green, thence around the corner and up Elm Street to the foot of the hill, where Cy Carter used to gather up the reins, adjust his quid, and carefully enunciate:

All aboard for the deepo or deppo."

The early bus was wont, in stormy weather, to drop the children, including the "Montague kids," at the Green, upon which fronted the Grammar and High Schools.

Ruth's father had often suggested a change of residence, increased expenses to be borne by him. But Ruth was firm in her decision that since she was miserable she would be as miserable as she could. She had made her own bed, she declared, and proposed to sleep in it without even having the mattress made over.

In some ways the place was not half bad. The outlook was pleasing in spite of the smoke from Frost's Furniture Factory, and from the woolen mill half hidden by the straggling growth of willows that grew along the stream. There were conveniences, too, that even the Fulton mansion could not boast. One did not have to pump the water to an attic tank. Every faucet at Hillcrest was self-starting.

Architecturally the house was difficult of classification and unworthy of description. Built by rule of thumb without professional assistance, it was uniform with thousands in like locality, down to the ready-made screen doors with scrollwork in the corners. Here were no shrubs to please the eye, but many hens to shoo.

Mrs. Montague's life, some dozen years of which were spent in this modest home, was not all roses. There were, to be sure, certain redeeming features on which she did not

dwell. There was the fact that the wolf was not scratching at the door. Her affairs had been so ordained that this wolf meant less to her than the wolves she had once seen in a picture, pursuing, with hungry jaws and glaring eyes, a sleigh in which was a mother who was throwing out her child to save herself. She had cried over this picture, and had worried herself into one of her headaches trying to decide whether she would yield to the same temptation if it should come her way. In the ever-ready check-book she took no more pleasure than in the fact that her teeth were sound.

Her husband, on the other hand, was quite enamored of the check-book. His chief worry, if he could be said to worry, was because there was a certain blank space at the bottom of each check which he was not empowered to fill. It was such a little space! It was a pity to stop writing. This impulse was so urgent that he more than once gave

way to it, and was prevented from presenting the product at the bank, instead of tearing it up, only by the realization that there might be a safer way of accomplishing the same result.

This obsession of Gerrold's was one of their bones of contention. Ruth spent many a night, when Gerrold was snoring, in debating the relative claims of her husband and her children, or rather of her child, for the claims of Helen received scant attention even at the hands of her mother. The check-book question she allowed to drift. Thus, for once, indecision was the deciding factor in a decision.

Oscar's sister Helen was named for her Aunt, Ellen Clarissa Proudfoot Montague, but she early showed an aversion to the name as well as to the lady who bore it. She persistently called herself, and begged others to call her, Helen, a matter in which she finally had her way, not from a desire on the part

of the family to please her, but because it did not impress them as worth an argument. This was the more remarkable since, in general, no question was deemed too trivial for protracted, if not acrimonious, debate.

In early life Helen had bid fair to become a replica of her mother on a larger scale. She had the same anxious look, the same frown, but on a less prominent forehead, between deep brown eyes, set well apart. Her wavy hair was of a rich brown, with a suggestion of auburn in the sunlight. Her generous proportions came from her father's side; already as a girl she was well rounded, deep chested, and half a head taller than her brother. Morbidly conscientious, a worrier of the altruistic type, she took upon herself the cares of the family. She would lie awake half the night revolving plans for one day relieving her father of his financial embarrassments. Between these real embarrassments and her mother's concealment of her

assets, lest the children grow up spendthrifts, Helen became quite a miser, and often took her brother to task for his liberal demands.

She did long for a pony. Finally she saw just the one she wanted. He was turned out to grass. He had splay feet and a rough coat. He was old, and deliberate of movement, but she thought him simply beautiful.

"Is it for sale?" she asked breathlessly.

"Wal, I guess about a five-dollar bill would do the trick," answered the farmer with a sly grin.

This was just the amount she had in her tin bank (unless Oscar had found where she had hidden it) and she rushed home. Oh, joy, the bank was there, and intact, so back she flew with the funds before another should secure the prize. The halter once in her hand she walked on air all the way to the front hitching post.

"For the land's sake! What has that child got now?"

"A real pony, Aunt Ellen, and all my own. I bought him with my own money, and I am going to call him Sir Galahad."

"Where are you going to keep him, and how do you propose to feed him?" relentlessly pursued Aunt Ellen.

"I never thought of those things," was the low-voiced reply, and Helen stifled the sobs until she reached her bedroom, carrying with her a misty view of a large woman with hair in curl papers, a patronizing smile on her face, hands on hips, and feet planted well apart.

Just what happened to Sir Galahad she never knew, nor ever asked. He disappeared somehow, and nobody thought to return to her the five dollars which the farmer reluctantly disgorged.

It would not be in accordance with the facts to say that the pony passed into oblivion, for the story was too good to keep. When it reached Oscar's ears the Knights of

the Round Table figured so largely in his conversation that even his father was moved to growl:

"Oh, let up! You run everything into the ground, way through to China!"

Helen had a certain hat of a form quite out of fashion, endowed with blossoms elsewhere unknown. She did hate the hat, and it takes the bloom off the most hardy of velvet flowers to be thrown too often on the floor!

"Aren't you ashamed!" Aunt Ellen said one day, picking it up and dusting, with the tips of her big fingers, the impossible petals. "Of course, it's nothing to you that your mother paid four good dollars for it at Atherton's and that it's worth more, for she got it off the bargain counter."

To this tirade Helen made no response, but kept on tracing geometrical figures in her lap. She first drew a circle in the direction of the clock hands, then another—to even up—in the opposite direction. It was

cruel to interrupt this needful adjustment, but Aunt Ellen could not "stand for any such foolishness." She carefully laid the hat on a chair, opened the door, and held it with one hand. "Now come into my room and try on your coat," she said, and made a decided gesture with the other hand to indicate the direction.

The coat was being made up after a Butterick Pattern, but it is a question whether Mr. Butterick himself (if there ever was a Mr. Butterick) would have approved it. In Helen's eyes it was an atrocity. On first viewing its lines she had rushed off for a good cry; but was not even allowed to cry in peace, for her mother followed her with a lecture on extravagance, ingratitude, and other unsaintly qualities, including disregard for the feelings of Aunt Ellen. Everyone seemed bound to play upon the feelings she was supposed not to have, on behalf of the feelings

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that other people were supposed to have in high degree.

Another bitter disappointment was connected with her first serious love affair. It was at the age of eleven. The recipient of her admiring gaze could whistle through his teeth without moving his lips. He did not have much use for girls, but took a patronizing interest in Lucy Smith. Now Lucy Smith had a real sled, besides a doll face with a rosebud mouth—Helen's was undeniably large. The mouth she could not help, perhaps she could the sled. But the tentative approach to the subject at the breakfast table was cut short by her father's impatient remark, "Do you think I am made of money? What difference does it make to a child of your age what kind of a sled you have?" He forgot that the affairs of eleven are as important to a child of eleven as those of forty are to the adult—perhaps more so, because there are fewer of them.

Of course there were some pleasures in Helen's childhood. Among them ranked high the ride astride the iron dog on her grandfather's lawn. Then, too, she loved to take her dolls to her grandfather's for tea in the summer house, with the tiny tea set brought out by the old housekeeper, who tried to be a grandmother to her—in later years the smell of lemon verbena always made her reminiscent—but on the whole this period of her life was so forlorn that when her mother sang the song about "Make me a child again, just for to-night," she used to give a little shudder and say to herself, "Make *me* a grown-up, please, just for forever."

CHAPTER IV

HELEN STUDIES BOTANY: OSCAR COMPARATIVE ANATOMY

Seth Fulton was dead, and Southfield had to readjust itself. Every week-day for forty years, as the First Church clock struck nine, Seth Fulton had been seen carefully to close the green side-door behind him, glance up at the sky, traverse the flags and wheel around the lilac bush. Every Sabbath Day as the First Church bell died down to a toll at 10.25, he had gone through the same routine with the added dignity of silk hat, gray gloves and gold-headed cane.

Elm Street would miss the slender figure in well-fitting Prince Albert coat and well-brushed hat, bowing affably right and left, the sunlight glistening on the square-toed ties of fine French calf, whose tips no more

required the box of modern times than a rare old desk needs ornamental carving.

His place could be taken as deacon of the church, also as teacher of the Bible class—another president was available for the bank; but who could preside with such dignity and grace at town meeting and Lyceum? And who could furnish food for so much harmless gossip? Not gossip affecting morals, nor yet manners—both, in his case, were unimpeachable—but regarding affairs of finance. Thus, methodical in his personal expense as he was generous in his donations, he had been known to make John trundle the trunks all the way from the station on the wheelbarrow to save hack-fare, and next day to present Brown College with the check for a new dormitory.

But the world revolves. In Southfield Seth Fulton was soon nothing but a memory.

The immediate effect of his demise upon the Montague family was removal from East

Side and assumption of manorial dignity. Not that they altogether did it credit. It was a sad descent from the dignified appearance of the old gentleman to the slouching forth at irregular intervals of his son-in-law, to say nothing of the abrupt emergence of young Oscar with a bang of the door and a pull at the wistaria that almost tore it from its anchorage. Mrs. Montague did the street more credit. The facial lines had deepened and the upright carriage was a thing of the past, but the slender outlines were preserved —indeed, accentuated—and there was a certain air of distinction that never left her.

Helen's appearance, which left nothing to be desired, was becoming more or less a dissolving view, to the disappointment of the neighbors and despair of the young men. From the age of fourteen to eighteen she was at Templeton; then came the two years in Paris, studying pianoforte; and after that, the two, in special course, at Vassar.

One of the distinctive features at Templeton was the interest in outdoor studies. It was there that Helen took up botany—not perfunctorily, with microscope and scalpel, but because she loved making friends with the wild flowers. She was an untiring pedestrian, and in the woods about Templeton left few crannies unexplored. All the girls knew the beech grove on Glen Road, a favorite terminus for walks and bicycle trips in early May, when the dog's-tooth violets nestled in the tree-roots, and the slope was strewn with anemone, bellwort and the modest crinkle-root. A scramble up the rocks disclosed columbine, Dutchman's breeches, and purple virgin's bower, while along the stone wall below, bloodroot ran riot. But Helen penetrated sphagnum bogs, where it was dangerous to tread, climbed rocky tangles where rattlesnakes were said to lurk, and plunged through swamps where walking was half swimming, and poison ivy terrorized the

tender. She even claimed that in a certain mossy wood she found Calypso borealis!

Of course, you'd know her for an amateur, by the green tin case if nothing more. They is it that in some professions the conventional is taboo, while in others it is requisite? The fancy skater would be embarrassed to find himself on the ice in street costume; why does the Gloucester skipper wear a pot hat and leave to the piazza yachtsman the cap significant of the sea? We can depend upon echo, at least, to give the conventional reply.

Oscar did not study botany—or anything else he didn't want to. Once out of the high school, he definitely stated that his education was complete. From that time he was gentleman of leisure, except for such small jobs as it amused him fitfully to hold down. At one period his favorite occupation was cat-hunting. This suited him to a dot and came about as follows: Southfield boasted two medical practitioners of distinc-

tion—Dr. Quackenboss and Dr. Quiller—not only rivals, but enemies as well. They never met, or if they did, they did not see each other. Everything that one of them did, the other didn't. They even refused to be of a size, so Quiller was slim and Quackenboss gigantic. A regular attendant at the First Congregational Church, Dr. Quackenboss was often summoned therefrom in the middle of the sermon. Dr. Quiller never went to church. The burly form of the one was often seen at strawberry festivals and the like; the other abjured society, limiting his amusements to an occasional game of whist, of which, in turn, his rival disapproved. And so on. Each held consultations on occasion, but never with the other. Each had a student who followed humbly in his wake, picking up the crumbs of wisdom not imparted in the schools. It was during this apprenticeship that Skinner (we will call them Skinner and Flint, since these names

are easy to remember) learned that a Southfield fish hook is best extracted, not backward, but by cutting off the knob and pushing through the nib; Flint that it is not only hard to wheedle cash from mill hands, but from those, as well, who can, but will not, liquidate.

Now these two students did not share the antipathy of their elders. On the contrary, they were as thick as thieves, and gladly shared such bits of wisdom as have been indicated. Both were determined to master the rudiments of anatomy. This required material. The best material not being available, they dissected cats.

It was difficult at first to procure the subjects for their dissection, but when Oscar learned of their necessity he made himself a useful ally. He would like nothing better. To their careful instructions regarding painless anæsthesia he listened patiently, with reservations of his own. In this quest he

made a curious discovery, namely, that when a cat is cornered she will emit a note which, if uttered by a man, would be called inhuman, but which, coming from the throat of a cat, is strongly suggestive of a human being in mortal terror. He furthermore discovered that this cry gave him a pleasure unsurpassed by any pain he had ever been able to inflict.

The first time he experienced this joy the cry was emitted by Mr. Fletcher's Tommy. The tale is a sad one, but had a funny side. Mr. Fletcher was the High School teacher, and lived on Chestnut Street, not far from the Green. He had told Skinner (or Flint, it doesn't matter which) that the Fletcher family had voted Tommy a nuisance, and he was welcome to the cadaver if he would make him one. This commission was duly relegated to Oscar Montague.

Mr. Fletcher had told Skinner (or Flint) that Tommy, being an unusually well-behaved cat, was generally at home of an

evening. So Oscar formed the habit of dropping in of an evening to inquire for him. But Tommy must have smelt a rat, or something like one, for he was so often out that Oscar was on the point of giving up the hunt. But late one night—that is, late for Southfield, say 9.30—he chanced to spy a light in Mr. Fletcher's kitchen, so he decided to have just one more try. Looking through the door he could plainly see old Mrs. Fletcher pottering about, but when he rapped, however loudly, she took no notice. Obviously she was deaf. Oscar was about to retire in despair when the old lady came to the door with a basin in her hand which she evidently contemplated emptying outwards. And this she almost did, so great was her surprise, not to say alarm, on finding Oscar directly in her path.

"Wha—wha—what do you want?" she managed finally to ejaculate.

" I came to see if the cat was in," politely answered Oscar.

" What? "

The information was repeated slowly and distinctly.

" I can't hear a word you say," protested the old lady, " and everybody's gone to bed, but I'll wake up my son," upon which she started hurriedly for the stairway. Oscar followed, loudly shouting, " It's no matter." This only stimulated her to greater effort. She fairly sprinted up the stairs. Oscar was even quicker, and seized her by the skirt.

" What do you want," she demanded, facing about, this time frankly terrified.

Oscar backed off down the stairs, waving his hands from side to side, shaking his head, and repeating:

" No matter—no matter."

When he was safely outside the door the old lady rushed across the kitchen after him, slammed the door and bolted it.

The next day Mr. Fletcher and Oscar met on Main Street.

"What in Heaven's name were you doing at my house in the middle of the night?" demanded the former.

"Only after your darned old cat," said Oscar sullenly.

"If that's all you wanted what made you chase my mother up the back stairs? You don't want to dissect her, do you? You frightened her half out of her wits."

Oscar tried to explain

"I don't understand it yet," said Mr. Fletcher, "but the cat is in a barrel and you can have him any time you want."

So Oscar fetched his potato-sack and brought Tommy to Dr. Quackenboss's office. The waiting room of this office was the usual meeting place and dissecting room of the two students. It was a downtown office, not connected with the doctor's house, and rarely visited by the doctor himself out of office

hours. Skinner was delighted with the prize. Judging by the heft, he said, Tommy was a bouncer, and would have a zygomaticus of unusual proportions. He loosed the string and peeped into the bag. Tommy justified the supposition. One bounce took him from the bag right through the front window—in the middle of which he left a clean round hole —and landed him in the street. A few more bounces found him in the Fletcher yard, with Oscar at his heels. This time the old lady knew what he was after.

"He's down cellar," she announced, and showed the way.

And now commenced a furious hunt. Tommy at first moved stealthily and in silence, but when he realized that Oscar was in earnest and it was a duel to the death, he gave vent to noises Oscar had never heard. He was as pleased as a monkey with a caramel. Finally he cornered Tommy in the coal

bin . . . but we draw the curtain. Oscar sometimes made free with his instructions.

"Did you chloroform him carefully?" asked Skinner.

"Sure," lied Oscar cheerfully. "I think he rather liked it."

"Where did you get the scratches?"

"Berrying."

Oscar's enemy and quondam friend was Nicky Bennett. Nicky was older than Oscar, and much stronger. When they walked home from school in snowball time, Oscar used to shudder in anticipation of leaving Nicky at the corner, because he was making wicked ones all the way and tucking them under his left armpit. Occasionally he would soak one in a rainspout to make it harder. He always gave them a finishing touch at the watering trough opposite the grocery. Oscar did hate to leave him. But he had to, under threat of bombardment from "near to." So he chose the lesser evil and skeedaddled. Once he

caught an icy one on the cheek that lasted him for a week.

He never forgave Nicky for stumping him to ride the biggest horse in the stable through the small door cut in the large one. The door was not much larger than the horse, but Oscar figured he could manage it. Probably he could have, had not Nicky given the horse a cut across the rump before Oscar was fairly ready. The animal went neatly through the door, but the boy didn't. On the contrary, he was scraped incontinently off and landed quite outside. These are only samples of Nick's mischief. When Oscar learned that Nicky's mother was so religious that on fast days she gave him only crackers and water, Oscar's only comment was that he wished she'd leave out the crackers! It is plain that Oscar was vindictive. Nor was his resentment limited to such harmless wishes. Oscar was not like other boys. He did not let his youthful threats lapse with the years, but

rather fostered and elaborated them. Nicky should beware!

But of this anon. We must not be left behind. The Montagues are shaking from their shoes, and other belongings, the homely dust of Southfield, and are moving to the metropolis. Mrs. Montague would have been content to occupy the Elm Street home indefinitely. Helen, too, was looking forward to renewing old associations under new conditions. But Southfield was too small for Mr. Montague's ambitions, and was rapidly becoming too hot for Oscar's comfort. So the women folks played martyr. Aunt Ellen stayed behind. Annie, the maid, they could not spare. Nor the cat.

CHAPTER V

MR. MONTAGUE STARTS SOMETHING

It was a dull day in the office of Dr. Ambrose, the New York alienist. The consulting room door was closed, it is true, which would indicate to the uninitiated that a patient was within, but the silence of the sanctum was unbroken save for the following one-sided conversation:

"Yes, this is Dr. Ambrose."

* * * * * * *

"I have it, Mr. Wright, of the law firm of Wright and Rogers, and your client's name is Gerrold Montague."

* * * * * * *

"Yes, I am following. He wants to get his wife committed, and himself appointed guardian, but you are not sure that his story is straight."

* * * * * * *

"Very well, I'll look into it. Good-bye."

* * * * * * *

Meantime a large, stoop-shouldered man with a chronic scowl and a forward thrust of the chin was taking in the details of the waiting room, which hardly justified his dissatisfied and suspicious attitude. It was an airy room, obviously planned for the accommodation of the patrons who kept the family alive, not grudgingly relinquished, under stress of circumstance, to medical practice. It was comfortable within, and what one saw without was restful, including the big Angora who was taking her siesta on the fence which framed a neat, though restricted, garden. On the table were the latest numbers of the *Nation, Ladies' Home Journal* and *Outlook,* along with copies of the Rosary and the Rubaiyat. The general impression was one of mulberry chintz, to which the Piranesi prints on the wall lent an air of quiet distinction. That the doctor's interests were not

wholly professional was shown by the fishing rod and gun in an unobtrusive alcove.

The critical observer of this interior was one of those men that you are tempted to turn and look at after passing them in the street, a temptation sure to be regretted in his case, for you would find that he also had turned, and was regarding you with a fixed stare embodying both resentment and suspicion.

Gerrold Montague (for it was none other) would pass for good-looking, in an aggressive way, with his thick curly hair, one lock of which always strayed in apparent negligence over his forehead, occasionally to be brushed away with a movement so closely simulating impatience that one wondered why he did not let the barber curb its wandering propensities. His moustache also was voluminous, and obviously the recipient of solicitous attention. A suggestion of gray amongst the brown was by no means detri-

mental to a countenance which must once have been somewhat attractive, but which was marred by a self-assertiveness far exceeding the legitimate equipoise of good looks. It must be added that a certain fulness of the veins suggested a fondness for the wine cup, not to say the whiskey straight. He did not peer into corners for clues, nor did he apply a lens to the cigarette-butt, left by an inconsiderate patient to burn a dark brown furrow into the polished mahogany, and yet, if cross-examined, he could have given an itemized appraisal of his surroundings. No sooner was the door of the consulting room open than he was on his feet.

"Will you step this way?"

Dr. Ambrose was tall, of slender build and generally well-groomed appearance. His brown beard was cropped to a point, his nose was thin and straight. When he removed his tortoise-rimmed glasses, which he swung back and forth while talking, his eyes showed

both sympathy and alertness. Their level gaze was somewhat disconcerting to one whose story was ambiguous, but the genuine sufferer found in them nothing but kindness. He gravely watched his visitor, who carefully closed the door behind him, glanced about the room, moved to another spot the chair indicated by the doctor's gesture, and began:

"Are we alone?"

"Quite."

"I wish to consult you about my wife. My name is Montague, Gerrold Montague—I spell it G-e-r-r-o-l-d. My address is The Kensington, 338 West 105th Street. I deal in real estate. I have been married twenty years. I have long suspected that my wife was insane, and am now assured by my lawyers, Wright and Rogers, that there can be no doubt of it. They have referred me to you merely as a matter of form to give testimony to that effect."

"What are the symptoms?"

"Well, she was always very freaky, moody, undecided and suspicious. She hesitates to give me any authority in the management of her property, and I am afraid she will play ducks and drakes with it. I have been very patient with her ways, but I now feel that something must be done to save her from herself. She cries most of the time, and sometimes has a strange look about the eyes. She suspects me of infidelity, and accuses me of drinking, though I am a model husband, and hardly touch a drop—or at least—that is—of course, I took a small drink this morning to quiet my nerves, I am so worked up about this, but I don't make a habit of it. She has a way of handling a large paper cutter in such a way that I am in constant fear of hearing that she has killed herself or one of the children. She is always talking about death and the grave, and always threatening to kill somebody—says she

would rather see her son in the grave than smoking cigarettes. And she has queer ideas about foreigners and hypnotism. Here is a letter she wrote." The complainant produced a long black pocketbook bulging with papers, and extracted therefrom a letter so well worn as almost to come apart in the creases, but still plainly legible. Dr. Ambrose adjusted his glasses and read aloud—prompted by Mr. Montague, who seemed to have it by heart—as follows:

DEAR OSCAR:

I have lain awake most of the night thinking about you. When I think of that Nicky Bennett, I could kill him. I believe he hypnotizes you. Why can't you associate with good boys instead of always choosing rowdies and foreigners for your companions? With your advantages you could choose the best instead of French Canadians that work in the mills. When you do associate with an American it is always some bad boy like Nicky Bennett who teaches you to smoke and use bad words, and I dare say worse. You will be sorry when y u see me in my grave, and remember that I killed myself because you would not mind me, and cared more about common companions

than for the mother who bore you, and who has sacrificed everything for you."

And so on for eight pages, signed,

Your loving Mother.

"Has she ever made any attempt to injure any of these people?" asked Dr. Ambrose, as he passed the letter back.

"Not that I know of, but I am afraid she will," answered Mr. Montague promptly, as if he rather hoped she would.

"How many children have you?"

"Two; the boy, Oscar, a very bright boy—he takes after me—there is nothing queer on my side of the family; and a daughter, Helen, who is more like her mother, except that she doesn't worry quite so much; she is rather quiet. I have sometimes thought she was a little dull—doesn't appreciate things like other people."

"Can you give me any particular illustration of your wife's inability to manage her property?"

"Why, of course she can't manage it so well as a man."

"What can't she do?"

"Why, she is likely to let it melt right under her eyes."

"Do you know that it has lessened under her management?"

"No, that's just it. She is so secretive about it that nobody has the least idea how matters stand. We may be paupers to-day for aught I know. She is suspicious, I tell you."

"Can you give me an instance of her unreasonable suspicion?"

"I tell you she is suspicious of everything."

"Yes, but can't you give me some illustration, so that I can judge about it? For example, does she suspect people are putting poison in her food, or that there is a conspiracy against her?"

"She may for all I know. She is very close-mouthed."

"Would your wife object to my looking her over?"

"Oh, no. I have arranged for that. Dr. Reynolds, my family physician, will meet you at any time you say. He said his assistant could make out the certificate with him, it was such a simple case, but I wanted everything according to Hoyle, and insisted on having a specialist."

"Very well, I will meet him at your home at five to-morrow."

"That will be all right," and the visitor passed out through the hall, stopping an instant at the door of the waiting room for a comprehensive view within.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONSULTATION

THE Montague apartment was a roomy one on the third floor. Two rooms fronted the Drive, and Helen seemed never to tire of watching the busy passage of everything from a scow to a steamboat, and a Simplex to a Ford. She was fascinated by the bustle, but her mother was too busy with her worries to note what was going on outside, further than to deplore the everlasting tooting. Her husband's fits of taciturnity, varied by outbursts of garrulous and explosive argument, his uncertain business (which required more and more visits to the barroom, doubtless to drum up trade), and the ever-widening circle of Oscar's escapades, would have been enough legitimately to deepen the frown and interrupt the slumber. But she could have

stood all this with the resignation of the ancient martyrs. It was the little things that wore her out.

"Do straighten that rug, and put your work basket out of sight. What will the doctor think of this place?" she complained in a querulous tone.

"He'll be thinking about the case instead of the room," replied Helen as she carried off the basket, straightening the rug on her way. "What worries me is that he may believe what father says about you."

"I wish you wouldn't take that superior tone to me. Nobody seems to think I have any feelings. I might as well be in an asylum as anywhere, and I don't know but I am insane, anyway. . . . Now that you are up, I wish you would move that rocking chair into the other corner. If the end of the rocker should catch anybody with low shoes in the ankle, and it should take the skin off, they might get blood poisoning and die—

you remember the man who pricked his finger with a thorn and died? "

" Yes, I remember, but mother, you must not talk so about being insane. What would become of me if they should take you away? "

" I don't believe you would care half so much as you would if that young man should stop riding in the Park."

" Why, mother, what do you mean? " said Helen, trying to look unconscious—a difficult matter with her cheeks growing pinker every minute.

" Don't you think I've got eyes? and ears, too; that is Oscar tooting outside; go to the window and see what he wants."

" Why, mother dear, we can't bother with him now. If he wants anything let him come up and get it. Why doesn't he do things like other people, anyway? I don't hear anybody else tooting under the windows."

" Oh, very well, I will go myself," said her mother wearily.

"No, mother, if anyone goes, of course, I will."

During this parley Oscar was sitting, or rather reclining, in the long, low, bright-yellow racing car in which he had come snorting up the Drive with cut-out open and hand on horn, which he used in the autocratic manner of a fire engine on a hurry call. After coming to a stop at 105th Street, and finding that half a dozen blasts produced no response, he extricated his legs with a curse, hurled himself into the vestibule (leaving the engine running with throttle advanced) and pushed the button till the elevator appeared. On reaching the apartment, he burst into the living room with the shout:

"Didn't you hear the horn? I want a pitcher of water for my radiator."

"For pity's sake," said Helen impatiently, "Why are you always coming here for water? Or, if you have to come here, why don't you ask the janitor for it?"

"Don't stand there talking, you make my head ache," interrupted her mother. "Go get it for him, Helen, and do hurry. I shouldn't want anything to happen to the car."

"What is old Reynolds downstairs for, and the other doc?" demanded Oscar.

"Oh, are they down there? They are going to examine me to see if I am insane—your father thinks I am."

"Hm—, well, I'm off for Atlantic City with the Count, while the going is good."

"Count indeed!" sniffed Helen, entering with the water.

"Well, he is a Count, and don't you forget it," snapped Oscar. "Can you let me have fifty dollars, mother?" and he rushed off with the money in one hand and the pitcher in the other.

"I don't take any stock in this case at all," Dr. Reynolds was saying as Oscar passed them on his return trip. "I half believe it is a put-up job."

He was a short man with a round, red face, a thick crop of old-fashioned, straw-colored side whiskers, and a double chin. As for his figure, he might have posed for the picture of the divine who was wont, when requested to say grace, to fold his hands over his ample paunch, and give thanks " for the blessings we are about to receive, and our capacity for their enjoyment! " He covered a great deal of ground in his Reo, and had a following of families who cared more for his cheery voice than for the most learned opinion that ever came out of the schools.

" The husband seemed to think that all he had to do was to have me and my assistant sign the papers and railroad her along to the hospital," he continued, " but I insisted on having a specialist. It wouldn't surprise me if he was in the hospital himself for D. T.'s before she was anywhere near being crazy, but perhaps you will see something I don't."

At this point Mr. Montague joined them.

His movements were jerky, his breath unmistakable, but his gait was steady, and the only peculiarity about his speech was its unrestricted flow.

"Hullo, Doc! There you are, Dr. Ambrose; on time I see. Ha! Ha! Well, gentlemen, this ought not to take but a few minutes. As soon as I found out Dr. Ambrose was satisfied she was insane I made all the arrangements, and it only needs your names on the certificate." And they entered the elevator.

Helen met them at the door. Between the confusion caused by her mother's remark about the young man, and her indignation at Oscar's behavior, her face had taken on a rosy hue that even her father noticed was becoming. Nor was Dr. Reynolds too absorbed in his professional interests to notice the tendrils escaping from the soft hair that waved down on either side of her face—she never followed the fashion of covering her

ears—and was gathered in a knot at the neck.

Her father took the part of master of ceremonies while she stood by, going through the motion of washing her hands in a way she had when not at ease.

"This is my daughter Helen, Dr. Ambrose. You know Dr. Reynolds, Helen. Come right this way, gentlemen; let me take your hats," he breezed in an expansive manner and a hearty voice that Helen hardly recognized. "Something like the gangway of a ship, what! Ha! Ha!" he ran on, leading them through the narrow passageway.

"This is your patient, Dr. Ambrose. You know Dr. Reynolds, Ruth. Take this chair, Dr. Ambrose." He indicated a thickly upholstered easy-chair with an extension for the legs that gave it the semblance of a sofa. He seated himself, meantime, in an arm-chair by the fireplace, and took a "Lord of England" from the box, which he then passed to Dr. Reynolds. "Mind if I smoke?" he

inquired, and was blowing rings before anyone answered, unless Dr. Reynolds' smile and shake of the head was an answer.

Dr. Ambrose shook hands in his deliberate way with Mrs. Montague, waited for her to sit down, then drew a straight chair near her for himself.

"You and I will sit over here out of the way," said Dr. Reynolds, patting Helen reassuringly on the shoulder. She gave him a grateful glance, then turned her eyes anxiously on the alienist, whose face she studied intently throughout the consultation, sitting on the edge of her chair with fingers interlaced.

"I suppose you understand why we are here," he began in a conversational tone, removing his glasses and holding them to the light.

"Oh, yes, I have told her all about it," interrupted her husband.

"You understand that we are here to look

into your mental condition? And you are ready to answer questions, Mrs. Montague?" pursued the alienist, unfolding a fine linen handkerchief, and carefully cleaning the glasses.

"Certainly," she answered without hesitation. "You want to see if I am insane."

Helen gave an involuntary shudder, and drew herself together.

"She talks all right, it isn't that," eagerly interposed her father, upon whom she turned a puzzled gaze.

"What is it then?" asked Dr. Ambrose, taking out a long, thin notebook, and looking expectantly at the speaker.

"Why, in the first place, she cries all the time," answered Mr. Montague.

"What do you say to thát, Mrs. Montague?"

"Yes, I suppose I do cry a good deal," she admitted, upon which Helen drew her eyebrows together and looked questioningly at

Dr. Reynolds, who gave her hand a little squeeze.

" Many women do, I dare say," said the questioner. " Is there anything in particular that you cry about? "

" She cries because she thinks I drink," suggested her husband.

" And you don't? " inquired Dr. Ambrose soberly, swinging his glasses.

Mr. Montague scowled. " I am not the one that's being examined," he said tartly, and added, " She thinks I have another wife outside."

" How about that, Mrs. Montague? "

No answer.

" What makes you think he drinks? "

No answer.

" We mustn't keep anything from the doctors, Ruth, it may as well all come out." His wife gave him one look, but made no response. " We may as well begin in an orderly way," said Dr. Ambrose, unscrewing the cap from

his fountain pen. "What is your full name, and age, Mrs. Montague?"

"You'll frighten her if you take notes," objected her husband, drumming on the arm of his chair. "Her name is Mrs. Gerrold Montague."

"What is your first name, please, Mrs. Montague?"

"Ruth."

"Do I frighten you by taking notes?"

"Of course not—I may be crazy, but I am not a fool."

"And how old are you?"

"She is—" began Gerrold, but stopped at a glance from the doctor.

"I was born on the thirtieth of May, 1876, at two A. M."

"Let me see, I'm not much of a mathematician, that makes you about—"

"Forty-four years, three months, two days and fifteen hours!"

Helen brightened up, and the questioner

smiled expansively, but Gerrold scowled. "She was always quick at figures—I don't think it's normal, myself, perhaps you do—it looks to me as if you were trying to make out she was all right," and he chewed his cigar viciously.

Helen looked at him in amazement. It was as if he had thrown aside a mask, and disclosed a strange face.

"I shall have to confess that she beats me at them," said the doctor pleasantly, unruffled by Gerrold's comment. "I assume that you keep your own accounts, Mrs. Montague?"

"Certainly; my husband sometimes fills in checks for me, and does things like that, but I keep my own accounts, and attend to my own business at the bank."

"Do you make out your income-tax return?"

"Why, of course."

"Do you know without asking when to use

white, and when yellow certificates to deposit coupons? "

" I know better without than with asking —I found one clerk would tell me one thing, and another another, so I studied it out myself. I don't believe anybody can tell every time."

Helen looked anxiously first at one physician, then at the other, to see how they took these answers, but could get no clue from their expressions. Dr. Reynolds continued to twirl the silver inkstand on the table, and Dr. Ambrose wrote busily. " What do you do when the bookkeeper makes a mistake, and the bank balance does not agree with yours? " he pursued, without looking up from his notes.

" They don't often disagree, but when they do the mistake is always mine, and I correct it," was Mrs. Montague's answer.

" What do you think of New Haven Railroad stock? "

" I haven't paid much attention to it since

I sold mine at two hundred—I took some loss on it, but it looked to me as if it was going lower, so I let it go."

Dr. Reynolds glanced quizzically at his colleague, about whose lips played a rueful smile, as he recalled a certain certificate in his own deposit box. Helen openly showed her pleasure, but Gerrold only scowled, and kicked sulkily at a stick that had fallen from the fire.

"You don't think that anyone is after your property, or wants to injure you in any other way, do you?" was the next question.

Mrs. Montague gave an almost imperceptible glance in her husband's direction, then answered in the negative.

"And you don't hear any voices, or anything of that sort, do you?" This question was also answered in the negative.

"Do you have any trouble in taking care of your household affairs?" Also answered in the negative.

"Or in taking care of your children?"

"I can leave Helen to the Lord, but Oscar requires considerable looking after." This in a rather flippant tone.

Many other questions were asked, chiefly with reference to her memory and judgment and knowledge of affairs, and various routine tests were made, after which the questioner said, "Very good. Now before we go I would like to have you name the president and the mayor, and bound Connecticut, merely to complete the records."

"Certainly. President Wilson; Mayor—why, that's funny, I can't think of his name, though I know it perfectly well."

Helen's face fell, and she stopped in the middle of a circle with long forefinger in the air.

"No matter, just bound Connecticut, and that will be all."

"This is like going to school again," said Mrs. Montague smiling. "Let me see, on

the north by Massachusetts, on the east by Rhode Island, on the south by—on the south by—what do we call it? I know just as well as I know anything—oh, well, call it the Atlantic Ocean; and New York—yes, we go south to New York; and on the west by New York. I never paid much attention to geography." She took no notice of Helen's effort to prompt her by making a very plain Long Island Sound with her lips.

"I believe that is all," said the alienist, unless you have some questions to ask, Dr. Reynolds."

"I don't think of anything," he replied. "You seem to have covered it pretty thoroughly."

"Shall we go into another room and talk it over?" said Dr. Ambrose.

"Suppose you stay here," suggested Mrs. Montague. "We can go into the dining room, and come back when you are ready. The family filed out, the one whose sanity

was in question looking the least interested of the three, her husband, evidently not satisfied, Helen biting her lip and saying to herself, "Why *couldn't* she have bounded Connecticut!"

In about five minutes they were summoned to hear the verdict.

"We find no sign of insanity," was the brief announcement. Helen took no pains to conceal her delight. Her mother received the opinion with an indifferent air. Gerrold expostulated:

"I don't see how you can settle that so quick. Isn't there some way of really finding out by studying the case?"

"They do take doubtful cases into the Mercy Hospital for a month or more for observation," was the answer, "but this is hardly an appropriate case for that," and the consultants shook hands smilingly with Mrs. Montague, then made their way to the door, accompanied by Helen, who was shaking

from the reaction, but felt an almost uncontrollable desire to hug them both. Her father did not rise, nor even say good-bye, but remained in his chair by the fireplace angrily puffing the "Lord of England," the mates to which he had pictured himself passing genially to his visitors on their departure.

"How splendid," Helen began, coming back and finding Mrs. Montague alone in the room, then stopped suddenly. She saw at a glance that her mother had taken on the determined look that portended some fixed, but not necessarily wise decision. "Why, what is the matter, mother dear, aren't you glad?"

"I am going to the Mercy Hospital!"

"Why, what for?"

"For observation."

"What *do* you mean?"

"Your father isn't satisfied, and I want to have it settled. They intimated that the examination wasn't final, and I propose to

make it so. If I am crazy I want to know it, and have everybody else know it; I don't propose to be living under false pretenses. Anyway, I'm *going,* and that settles it!"

"If you do I shall almost believe you *are* crazy," rejoined Helen, in despair.

"That's right, now you're down on me when I am trying to do what I think is for the best. I get very little sympathy from my family. I wish your Aunt Ellen was here. She would understand my point of view."

"But what shall we do when you are gone?"

"Oh, your Aunt Ellen can come, I suppose—I should think I had enough on my mind without settling that. You are old enough to take on some care, I should think; and if your mother is crazy—as you seem to think—it is time you did."

On the morning of the departure, which took place in spite of Dr. Reynolds' remonstrance, the sun was shining brightly into

the windows of her mother's bedroom, where Helen was putting on the finishing touches.

"I don't need to leave any special instructions about the meals," Mrs. Montague was saying, as she sorted her handkerchiefs, "but don't forget to have the baked beans Sunday morning if you can get Mary not to make those light-colored abominations they call baked beans in New York. If she can't use the pot instead of a pan, have chipped beef and cream. But if she is willing to bake them in the pot, don't let her forget to put in plenty of molasses, and a pinch of mustard—and an onion the size of a marble—and two bay leaves—and half a teaspoonful of soda. Then don't forget—

"Yes, mother, I have all that by heart—but oh, I am going to miss you so!"

"You will probably forget all about me when you walk in the Park."

"You know I won't, mother," was all

she said, as she sat on the bulging bag and snapped the lock.

" The taxi is at the door, please," Annie reported. The last words were said. Mrs. Montague started upon her journey with an " over-the-hills-to-the-poorhouse " expression, leaving Helen with the household on her hands.

The household turned out a rather meager one. Her father rarely put in an appearance. During the few meals that he ate at home, he avoided her eye, and confined his remarks to " Yes," " No," and " As you please." Oscar was still at Atlantic City with his " Count." Aunt Ellen came, ostensibly to help, but Helen could not see that her advent materially lessened the cares. Aunt Ellen's arm was troubling her. Ever since an operation some years ago it had been supposedly dangerous for her to raise it. This reduced to the minimum her usefulness about the house. She would not often ask people in so many

words to wait upon her—perhaps she had a constitutional aversion to putting herself under an obligation—but she would say, looking through the big glasses, set so far away on her nose that they magnified her eyes and gave her the appearance of an owl: "I don't see my scissors!" And somebody would have to go for the scissors.

In view of the addition of this pseudo-invalid to the family, it was decided to send for a certain Mrs. Crosby, to help out. This proved a fortunate suggestion, and the fact that she added to her other useful qualities a philosophy all her own, furnished a milestone in the progress of the daughter of the house.

CHAPTER VII

INTRODUCING MRS. CROSBY AND SERIOUSLY SARAH

"I do wish Aunt Ellen wasn't so trying," said Helen in a weary tone, letting her work drop in her lap. It was a bright October morning about a week after her mother's departure. They were sewing in her room.

"She *is* tryin'," assented Mrs. Crosby, "but I don't know's it'll make her any less so to wish she wasn't. I'm afraid," she continued, twisting her thread into a point and approaching the needle's eye to it, "if we got that wish, they'd be somethin' jest as bad troublin' us the next minute. How'd it do to wish we could *stand* Aunt Ellen? You know everybody's got an Aunt Ellen—or somethin' worse!"

It will be evident that Helen had become quite chummy with our homely philosopher.

Moreover, she was ready to take to heart and ponder her wise sayings without resentment, an attitude not so very unusual—toward the wise sayings of people outside the family.

"I don't pretend to know jest what we were put here for," continued Mrs. Crosby, making a knot in the thread and spearing a button in the bottom of her work-box, "but I like to imagine I was put here to see ef I could stand it, troubles and all. When I am feelin' that way I find myself lookin' round for troubles, and bein' kind o' disappointed ef they don't show up," and she wound the thread round and round under the button, pushed the needle through the cloth, and finished off on the other side. She never allowed her pragmatic utterances to interfere with her work. That was part of her philosophy.

"Keep a-knittin', there's a motter for you," she had said one day, when Helen was carefully weighing the comparative urgency of

two tasks. "Either a sweater *or* a sock is better'n a pile o' raveled-out yarn—and some people could most do both in the time they take decidin' which to begin on."

Nor did she let anything interfere with her appetite—she "set a store by her food." "How about luncheon?" she asked, when the button was secure.

"Why, I was forgetting all about luncheon," said Helen apologetically. "It seems as if I couldn't eat a thing while mother is in the hospital."

"What good does that do you—or y' mother, either?" observed Mrs. Crosby. "Sometimes it seems as ef *things* had more sense'n folks. Jest imagine the furnace tellin' the chore-man she was so worried because the saw-horse had broke his leg that she couldn't swaller a single hunk o' coal! The chore-man would say—if he didn't say somethin' worse—'you are a nice kind of a furnace, you are!' But with folks it's different, and

when a woman can't eat a mite o' food because somebody's sick in the house, other people say, 'Aint it pathetic! Ain't it too bad!' And it *is* too bad they can't git the grit to take troubles standin' up instead o' lyin' down. And even when the troubles are overpowerin' it's bad enough to be up against a stone wall without bangin' y' head against it, too!"

Helen pondered seriously on this homily as she took her constitutional in the Park that afternoon. It was a rare, crisp autumn day. The grass was covered with brown leaves. The clouds had disappeared, and the branches of the trees were sharply outlined in shadow on the path. There was a tang in the air that made her glad of the taupe cape. She carried on her left arm the inevitable knitting-bag, and the dark blue lining of the cape was thus exposed to view. This and the close-fitting hat that matched the cape in color, and bore two curved and pointed

wings, imparted quite a jaunty air, which her upright carriage did nothing to diminish. More than one passer-by paused to admire. This Helen might sometimes have noticed, but not to-day, so absorbed was she in the sorrows of the saw-horse and the attitude of his friend the furnace. Her thoughts ran something like this:

"I wonder if I am taking my troubles standing up. When I was little I seemed always to be running to my room for a cry. I have given that up except for *very* serious things, but I seem to be doing something like it inside. It isn't half so comforting, and it isn't quite so helpless, but I believe that is what she means by taking things lying down."

Thus ruminating her shortcomings she forgot to watch her step, and was brought to a sudden realization of her surroundings by the shout, "Look out, there!"

But it was too late. She had followed the foot-walk without noticing that it was inter-

sected by the bridle-path, and simultaneously with the shout came the impact of a heavy body against her shoulder. . . . All she could remember afterward of the affair was the sound of creaking leather, the smell of a very warm horse, and a sickening pain in the back of her neck.

The remnant of this pain was the first thing to attract her attention on awakening. Instinctively putting up her hand, she found that her head and neck were held firmly in a bandage. She was glad of this in a vague way, when she tried to move her head, but what it was all about she could not imagine. Nor did her search for familiar landmarks help the matter. She realized that she was in bed, but she missed the stain which, because it was only Helen's room, had never been removed from the ceiling. And when she followed, as far as the bandage permitted, the place where the stain ought to be, she failed to find the familiar frieze. The

wall paper, too, was strange. Then her eyes travelled to the top of a window through which she could see the foliage of a tree, cut by the screen into minute squares that gave the picture the appearance of being done in cross-stitch. . . .

"How are you feeling?" asked a pleasant voice she did not recognize.

"I'm taking it standing up!" was the startling reply.

"You look to me like lying down," continued the pleasant voice.

"I'm talking nonsense," said Helen, realizing that it wasn't altogether nonsense after all, "but where am I, and how did I come here?"

"You are supposed not to talk, but you are in my house. I am Mrs. Newcomb. My son was riding in the Park when you stepped in front of his friend's horse and were knocked down. He feels very badly about it, but my son says it couldn't have been

helped. You kept right on, he says, as if you were walking in your sleep. You must have been thinking very hard about something."

"I was," said Helen simply. "It all comes back to me now," and she closed her eyes.

Then she thought that she was back at Templeton trying to pass an examination in a subject she had never heard of. She started to cry over it, but was suddenly arrested by the word "Stand!" She awoke enough to realize that it was only a slam of a distant door. Then she thought she was a mummy in the Metropolitan Museum. From the shelf of canopic jars her old friends Mestha, Harpy, Tommy-top and Quebs-enough gazed at her solemnly, Mestha, as usual, slightly on the slant. Someone said, "Straighten her," and she felt herself placed in the upright position, but head down. Upon this she thought, "Well, I am taking this

standing all right, even if I am wrong end up," and she laughed herself awake.

"Whoa, there! Steady now, s-t-e-a-d-y," said another pleasant voice, this time a familiar one, and she found herself gazing into the twinkling eyes of Dr. Reynolds.

"Why, Dr. Reynolds, how did you get here?" she asked, now quite awake, and feeling almost like herself.

"By way of the Reo Grand," chuckled her visitor.

"Shame on you, Dr. Reynolds, but how did you know I was here?"

"Oh, I was notified. Your mother wrote me from the hospital and asked me to come and see you. She enclosed a letter for you. Do you think you can read it, or shall I read it to you?"

"I think I can manage it," said Helen. She had an instinctive feeling that she would be ashamed of the contents of that letter:

DEAR HELEN:

I didn't sleep a wink last night worrying about you. I am in a terrible state. The minute I heard of your accident I started to go right to you; but I suddenly remembered there was going to be a clinic on my case to-day. It didn't seem fair to leave just now. Then when I thought of staying away it seemed heartless not to go to you, and I went over and over it until I couldn't think at all and I thought my head would burst. It is terrible to have to decide such questions when you really care—I suppose people without any feeling can decide them right off, but I can't.

I couldn't do so much for you anyway—you have a good nurse, I understand—and I worry so when anyone is sick that I only hinder the nurse when I try to help. And if I should do something wrong and make somebody worse, I believe I should kill myself.

Please explain to the Newcombs why I did not come. I suppose it is Fred Newcomb who used to live in Southfield. Above all, be sure and have them keep a strict account of the expenses—I should die of mortification if they thought I would let them pay your bills without being reimbursed.

Your loving Mother.

"Is it all right?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, yes," answered Helen, smiling.

" She isn't quite well enough to come to me now, but it's nothing serious."

" You take it like a brick," was all he said —aloud.

" I'm going to try to take everything like a brick from now on," said Helen earnestly, " and I want you to help me."

" Put it there," cried the little man, and he gave her hand a squeeze that seemed to say, " I know all about it; now we're pals." What he really said was, " I'm not in your father's good books just now, and you are not likely to see me at the house, but if you ever want a good talk you know where I live."

The next day the patient had progressed to the point of sitting up in bed in a mob cap and a very becoming blue negligee furnished by her hostess, who announced, while adjusting it, that her son would like to pay his respects to the invalid, if the invalid didn't mind. To this proposition Helen gladly assented, though without special enthusiasm.

The fact that Mrs. Newcomb's son had been riding in the Park when she met with her mishap brought so forcibly to her mind the picture of a certain erect figure with broad shoulders and clear-cut features—a figure at which she had often stolen a glance when she thought the keen grey eyes were turned the other way—that she gave little thought to the coming visitor. Why had the fates made it so easy for this young man to come within speaking distance, while that one might as well be in China for all the good it did her? It couldn't do any harm to think of him; anyway, she probably would never speak to him—she didn't even know his name, and perhaps it was only in her imagination that he had cast more than a casual glance in her direction. So absorbing were these thoughts that she hardly heard the introduction:

"This is my son, Fred, Miss Montague," and Helen looked up—

"Why, it's—" she began, then came to a standstill, blushing furiously.

"Why, have you two met before?" asked Mrs. Montague.

"Oh, no—that is—not exactly," Helen heard herself saying, not very coherently, for there within a few feet of her was the erect figure, there the clear-cut features, and the keen grey eyes, this time looking directly into hers. He had the advantage of foreknowledge—an advantage it was her first impulse to resent, but the thought occurred to her, "Here's something to take standing, all right," so she recovered her balance, and the blush gradually receded.

"It almost looks as if Miss Montague had seen you before, even if she didn't that day," said his mother with a smile, "but a big, hulking thing like you on a horse sixteen hands high, can hardly hope to escape observation. Besides, Prince is an unusually fine

animal, and probably Miss Montague is interested in horses—aren't you, dear?"

"Well, I did have a pony once—for a day," assented Helen, now over her discomfiture, and she told the story of Sir Galahad. The talk then drifted into easier channels.

Mrs. Newcomb did not forget the blush. Nor did Helen. On the contrary, she blushed all over every time she thought of it, even in the middle of the night. When Frederick Senior heard of it he thoughtfully tapped the arm of his easy chair in a way he had, and observed:

"I hope there is nothing in it."

"Why do you hope that?" asked his wife.

"If there is anything in heredity, and I think there is, I should not want a son of mine to marry into that branch of the Montague family," was the answer.

"I certainly have gathered that her father is a drinking man," allowed Mrs. Newcomb, "but surely, habits are not inherited."

" The appetite that originates the habit is inherited," responded her husband sententiously.

" Your Honor will note my exception to the ruling of the Court," said the counsel for the defendant—for Mrs. Newcomb had already so far succumbed to Helen's charm as to have adopted that attitude—" and I will take up another branch of the case. It has reached my ears that at one time the Court was inclined to view leniently whatever shortcomings may be found on the other side of the house! "

" The Court does not understand that any question is before it, and declines to make a ruling," was the answer. " But, seriously, Sarah,"—this form of address was so frequent on the part of her consort that Mrs. Newcomb used to say, " Everybody else calls me Sally, or Aunt Sally, but my husband calls me ' Seriously Sarah ' "—" whatever I may have thought of her in my younger days,

she certainly was a worrier, to say nothing of being given to indecision and other objectionable habits of mind." And the court smacked its lips.

"Yes, but I have had quite a talk with Helen about that, and it seems she has decided to follow a different course herself. You would be surprised to see how sensibly she looks at things already, and how differently she takes things from the way she says she formerly did."

"Can the leopard change his spots?" asked Mr. Newcomb with three deliberate taps of the pencil.

"No, but the kitten can change her habits," replied his spouse.

"That may be," persisted her husband, "but if there is anything in the views of Lamark, and I think there is, it is impossible to inherit acquired characteristcs, so that no amount of improvement on her part would benefit her descendants, supposing she had

any; and in such important matters we must leave nothing unconsidered." Mr. Newcomb had added eugenics to his serious studies, and when he took up a thing, he took it up, as the saying is, " whole hog."

" I suppose that's so, dear, but it does seem as if there was such a thing as too much caution. Personally, I am in favor of taking some chances. But let's cross that bridge when we come to it, and have our game of chess."

" That is all right, but if it ever looks as if the affair was becoming serious, I shall certainly consult a physician about it."

" Which will you have, dear, right or left? And I'll let you give me a knight."

The Court chose white, and opened with the king's bishop's gambit, reserving the question of eugenics for further advisement.

It will be seen that Mr. Frederick Newcomb, of the highly respectable firm of Rogers, Newcomb and Wentworth, took

himself seriously. Already as a boy (with the same square head and Roman nose, but minus the double chin) he had had his theories, and his playmates, in the old Southfield days, soon learned that they must conform, or play without Fred Newcomb. "Schoolmaster" was their nickname for him. A little later, as we have seen, through his overstrenuous efforts to make a certain young lady measure up to his standards, he had succeeded only in hastening her decision that a lifetime of breakfasts opposite him would be more than she could endure—an oft-regretted leap, on her part, from a comparatively comfortable frying pan into a very hot fire.

This experience had wounded his pride, but had not broken his heart, or whatever organ he made love with—perhaps it was his head—and finally he had taken unto his bosom, or, rather, into his ménage, the sensible, as well as attractive, spouse upon whose

hospitality Helen was thrown by the accident in the Park. While not pachydermatous, the lady was extremely well poised. Her husband's utterances—delivered after the manner of rulings, rather than mere opinions—interested and amused, but never irritated her. And she, in turn, did much to mold those opinions. This fact he would have been the first to acknowledge if he had known it, for scrupulous honesty, even with himself, was at the foundation of his moral and intellectual make-up.

Furthermore, it had not taken one of her keen insight long to discover that he was, at heart, an extremely good fellow, and that he envied, rather than despised, those of his competitors who could wield the nimble rapier as well as the honest bludgeon. Indeed, as she soon found out, his brusk, even dictatorial, assertions often concealed something very much like diffidence.

The acquaintance formed by Helen during

her enforced visit sufficed to satisfy her that Mrs. Newcomb should be her model in the new venture, and, struggle as she might to avoid making comparisons unfavorable to her mother, she quickly formed the habit of saying to herself in time of stress, "How would Aunt Sally take this?"

One episode did disturb her. This was the affair of the book. Her hostess had given her a rare book of her husband's to look over. It contained several exceptionally fine plates. These Helen had absent-mindedly, and heavily, outlined with her pencil. When she realized what she had done she wished she could sink through the mattress. But she couldn't; she had to "'fess up." Mrs. Newcomb treated the matter lightly, though she foresaw her husband's comments.

"How could I ever have done it?" exclaimed Helen in a spasm of contrition.

"I don't see," smiled her hostess, "unless

it was in the same way that you are marking the spread while you are talking."

Helen looked down, and to her horror saw that she was following the figures on the white counterpane with the same black pencil. From that time she kept close watch upon her straying fingers, and was astonished to find how many queer things they did without her realizing it. She was also surprised to find that she could stop them.

In talking to her mother afterward she compared the process to catching trout. She had done quite a lot of trout fishing—of a kind—with a worm—before Oscar stopped taking her because she caught two to his one.

"If you wait for the trout to swallow the hook like a horn pout," she explained, "you lose him. You have to be ready *beforehand* if you want him in your basket, instead of miles away."

"Why not try the trout business on your

habit of pushing out your lips and blinking?" suggested her mother.

"Do I do that?" asked Helen incredulously.

"Of course you do. Everybody but you knows it, and I supposed you did."

"Then why haven't you spoken of it?"

"Because I thought you couldn't help it, and I didn't like to stir you up. You know you haven't always been so angelic as you are of late."

"You see if I can't help it!" was all she said, but she said that as if she meant it, and time showed that she had.

CHAPTER VIII

MRS. CROSBY SOLILOQUIZES

"FUNNY," soliloquized Mrs. Crosby, smoothing her work on her knee and holding it off for inspection, "how many pins a reel capable pincushion will hold without squirmin'."

They were again at work in Mrs. Montague's room, Helen, as far as her neck was concerned, none the worse for her experience, though not yet strong, and with a peculiar, not altogether unpleasant, thumping in the chest whenever certain thoughts came into her head, almost suggesting that another vital organ had been seriously affected.

"And even supposin'," continued Mrs. Crosby, "you could fill one plumb full—which I never see's I know of—and you couldn't put in another, it'd only be because it couldn't hold any more, not because it

minded. Now with folks it's different. Folks has a way of beginnin' to squirm at the mere idee o' havin' a pin stuck in 'em—of course, the kind o' pins I mean can't draw blood—and by the time it reely is stuck in they either collapse or explode. That'd be all right if it did 'em any good, but it don't. Now when anybody sticks pins into me, I jest says, 'Stick away, that's what I'm for.' I don't have to do much imaginin' for this—I'm built somethin' like a pincushion anyway," and her fat sides quivered.

"Now there's your Aunt Ellen," she continued, "When she found I didn't even squirm inside—and she's the kind that can tell every time—she quit stickin' pins inter me, because it wasn't any fun."

This monologue set Helen thinking: The result was a surprise to Aunt Ellen.

"Why I declare," said that worthy lady in the course of the morning, "I've left my work basket in my room."

"Too bad," said Mrs. Crosby.

Helen said nothing, but "kept a-knittin'." She did not even look up to intercept her aunt's questioning gaze through the big specs.

"I—have—left—my—work—basket—in—my—room." This time the words were enunciated very slowly and very distinctly.

"I'm sorry," said Helen, "but I'm too tired to offer to get it for you. It seems as if I couldn't take another step."

"You've done enough for Oscar and for your father this morning; I should think you might do *something* for me," persisted her aunt in an injured tone. "I'd get it myself, only it's on the shelf in my closet, and I am afraid it would hurt my arm to reach up."

"How did you put it up there?" asked Mrs. Crosby, with a flourish of politeness.

Aunt Ellen looked at her sharply, but the round face was expressionless. "I put it up

with my other hand, if you must know," she finally replied.

" Oh, I see," said Mrs. Crosby.

" But it hurts my bad arm to reach up with the well one," added Aunt Ellen.

" Too bad," said Mrs. Crosby, " perhaps ef you got up in a chair it would be easier—you wouldn't have to reach so high, you know." And she fell to pushing things about in her basket as if her life depended on finding a particular hook.

" I don't suppose you would care if my arm got paralyzed," snapped Aunt Ellen, " and as for you, Ellen Clarissa—that's your name, and you know it—I believe you're trying to play invalid because you had an accident a month ago. I don't believe you would care if I was dead."

" Why, of course I should, Aunt Ellen," said Helen pleasantly, saying to herself meantime, " Never touched me."

" Well, I suppose I can get along without

the basket if you will lend me your scissors," said Aunt Ellen.

"All right, here they are," and Mrs. Crosby held them out.

"Well, of all the lazy people—What are *you* grinning at, young lady?"

Helen continued to smile pleasantly, but vouchsafed no reply, and her indignant relative limped off to her room (just why she limped on such occasions no one knew), ignoring the proffered scissors, but "registering" a look that should have killed.

"I believe I've dropped a stitch," was all the response from Helen that reached her aunt's ears.

"You're coming on," vouchsafed Mrs. Crosby, with a chuckle. "It won't always be so easy as that, but on the whole, it'll keep gettin' easier—if you don't get too confident —or too forgetful. Them that ain't built for pincushions has to keep remindin' themselves that them pins can't do any reel harm. Then

after a time it gets to be kind o' second natur' to stand em."

This particular battle did not have to be fought over again, for Aunt Ellen departed next day with the announcement that her arm was worse, and she thought New York air was bad for it.

"Now, forgit it," was the only comment Mrs. Crosby made as the taxicab drove away in the rain, with the hair trunk alongside the driver, and a very erect passenger in the back seat, wearing a nobby hat that might have been very becoming if worn by a young woman of twenty. Helen had kissed her good-bye, and carried down her bandbox. "Give my love to everybody in Southfield. I wish I was going with you," were her parting words, the reply to which was a sniff, and "I guess you'll get along all right here with your new friend. Some folks seem to forget that blood is thicker than water."

If she expected Helen's face to flush in the

old familiar way she was disappointed, for she only smiled pleasantly, and said, "Well, good-bye, Aunt Ellen, take care of yourself."

"How easy it is," she ruminated. "Just as easy as protesting and sulking. And it makes you feel as if you had come out of a nice cool bath." And she promptly dismissed Auntie and her ways from her mind.

It had been a happy coincidence that her sojourn with the Newcomb family had followed so closely upon the heels of Mrs. Crosby's sage remarks. The impression left on her mind from that visit was as if she had watched an October sunset reflected on the smooth surface of a lake. She had dreaded to return to the bickerings and the buffetings of her own home life. But when she found herself back in the familiar surroundings, everything was different. Even the weather, whose mutations had seemed especially designed for her discomfort, she found was more endurable.

When her father came home on the night of Aunt Ellen's departure, just enough under the influence to be looking for trouble, he began to cross-question Helen about it. But she cut him short with:

"Why, father, you don't seem to be yourself to-night. Wouldn't it be a good idea to lie down a little while before dinner?"

Now this subject had been taboo in the household. Every member of the family was familiar with the facts, but no one had ever come so near to putting it into words. Helen's remark almost startled her father into sobriety. He glared at her for a full minute in silence. She half expected a blow, but her steady gaze did not falter. Finally his own eyes fell:

"I believe I'm not," was all he said; then, "Isn't dinner nearly ready?"

"What a fool I've been all my life," said Helen after he had gone to his room.

"Mebbe," acquiesced Mrs. Crosby. "Most

of us have. But I wouldn't put in too much time regrettin' the past. The present is enough for me to attend to, for one." After a pause she added, "When I find myself goin' over things that are past and gone, and can't be helped, I have a motter I picked up somewhere—it sounds like a commandment, but I don't *think* I ever see it in the Bible—'Chew not the rag.' That's the way it goes, and it helps me a lot."

Helen's next test of emotional poise was with her brother. It was after Mrs. Montague had returned from the hospital with a clean bill of health. Oscar had tooted under the window, as was his wont, but had not been answered.

"Now, sit still, mother dear," admonished Helen. "You know you promised that I could have my way next time." Her mother acquiesced, though she ached to go to the window. Again Oscar burst into the room:

"Don't try to make me believe you didn't hear the horn this time," he began fiercely.

"Why no, of course we heard it. Everybody in the block could hear it," Helen responded cheerfully. "It isn't nice, you know. There is no reason why you should be disrespectful to us just because we are your mother and sister."

"But I must have some water for my radiator," he blustered.

"Then why not come up and get it?" was the answer.

"Seems to me you are taking a high and mighty tone to-day, you have always got it for me before," sneered her brother.

"Then isn't it your turn to get it yourself?" responded Helen pleasantly. "By the way, I've been wondering why you don't have it filled at the garage."

"They are a pack of lazy loafers. Every time I ask for anything they pretend to have something else to do. I believe they are

banded together to freeze me out. I have complained to the manager, but he stands in with them. And when they do fill the radiator the car doesn't act right. I believe they put something in the water. And once when I got the janitor downstairs to give me some, it acted the same way.

"Why, Oscar! What a crazy idea!" exclaimed Helen.

He looked at her suddenly with narrowed eyelids. "You're not in it yourself, are you?"

"How absurd," she began—then the kitten suddenly took a hand, or, rather, four feet, in the game. She was jet black, and had yellow eyes. Having daintily picked her way through the bric-a-brac on the mantel behind Oscar, she carefully measured the distance and took a flying leap, landing square on his left shoulder. The recipient of this attention was startled for a moment—perhaps he thought it was part of the conspiracy

—but he immediately seized the offender by the middle, and would have thrown her through the window had not Helen held his arm. She had always been stronger than her brother, and he had always come off second best—excepting when he resorted to some underhand trick—in their early physical encounters. At this juncture their mother collapsed in her chair, calling faintly, "Oh, dear, I'm having one of my heart attacks," and Helen rushed to her side. Oscar tossed the kitten into the corner, and the clash of wills ended in a draw, with the odds in favor of Helen, who felt, on going over it afterwards, that she had taken a step in her emancipation. And Oscar, in his turn, showed signs of treating her with something akin to respect. At all events, he seemed in no hurry to renew the attack.

Equilibrium was hardly established in the room, and Mrs. Montague on the sofa, when the maid appeared at the door.

"Mr. Newcomb to see Miss Montague," she announced.

"Show him into the library," said Helen.

"Just as well the damn' cat jumped on me," said Oscar to himself on going over the episode. "I was just on the point of letting her know that Nicky Bennett is at the bottom of the whole business. Helen wouldn't understand it—she'd call it a crazy notion. She's just that unreasonable, especially since she's taken up with that Crosby woman." Just why Nicky should abandon other business to persecute Oscar was not quite clear. But there it was—no other explanation was conceivable for so obvious a conspiracy.

"All the same," wrote Helen in her diary that night—she was one of those exceptional people who keep a diary all the year round; it was a diary, moreover, that contained not merely a "line a day," but a real record of

the thoughts and feelings that some young ladies, it is said, communicate to their intimates by way of the mail—"All the same, it was nothing but a family row. He slammed me and I slammed him. It didn't feel at all like coming out of a nice cool bath—more like an antiphlogistine bath that wouldn't come off!"

"I wonder if Aunt Sally wouldn't have done it more like this: "Look here, brother, dear, I've been thinking it over and decided not to answer the horn any more. It's condoning a crime. But I'll compromise with you. If you will come up and ask me real pretty, I will carry the water down for you.' If there is a next time, I will try it. It won't do Oscar any good, but it may me. Now I believe I've extracted all the juice there is in that rag, so good-night."

"P. S. Fred Newcomb called to-day to inquire after my health!"

CHAPTER IX

HELEN LEARNS TO LOVE A YELLOW CAR

"I WOULDN'T mind so much if the car was any other color," said Helen. She and Fred were walking in the Park, this time together—for safety, Fred had explained when he proposed it. She was relating her experiences with the radiator. "You have to be so particular about choosing things to go with colored cars. Imagine wearing a green gown to fill a yellow radiator from a purple pitcher! You'd expect an explosion. I hate a yellow car, anyway."

"Couldn't you learn to love—" Fred began, then precipitately completed the sentence in answer to Helen's startled glance—"a yellow car?"

"You don't mean to say you have a yellow car, too?" said Helen incredulously.

"I'm afraid I have—not a buttercup yel-

low—rather a deep yellow, but unmistakably yellow."

"Well, perhaps I could learn to love a *deep* yellow one. I'd try, anyway, to make up for my break, if nothing more."

"Oh, your break is not half so bad as the one I made the other day about the monkey."

"What was that?"

"I was passing a store with a friend, and we stopped to look at a monkey in the show-window. I said that I couldn't see how any lady could have a monkey for a pet, and he said, 'I don't know, my wife has quite a cute little one.'

"Oh, yes," I hastened to say, "I love *little* monkeys—I mean a great big, strapping monkey, like the one in the window. 'Too late!' said my friend."

"I am afraid I was too late, too," said Helen ruefully.

"Not too late for a ride in the car—that is, if you'll go."

"I'd love to, dearly. And I'll be careful to wear something that won't cause an explosion."

"I want to see that other car and compare shades," said Fred. "Where is it now?"

"Oscar is taking a trip with his friend, the Count."

"What Count?" asked Fred, with a suggestion of anxiety that Helen seemed not to notice.

"I don't know what he is Count of—Monte Cristo, perhaps. I dare say it is something to do with a prison—I don't like him," was the answer, greatly to Fred's relief. "I think he is a fraud," she continued.

"I wonder if he isn't the chap," said Fred, "that a sporting friend of mine was telling about. He earned the title by being knocked out at the start of the only sparring match he ever went into. They gave him the count.

"What does that mean? I am afraid I don't qualify as a sporting friend."

"Why, if the man can't get up before the referee counts ten, he is out. They call it giving him the count."

"Oh, I see."

"But I don't think it happened in New York."

"The Count hasn't always lived here. He used to live in Chicago.

"Then perhaps he is the man."

When Fred drove up for her within a few days, she found that a yellow car was not so bad after all. It was a *very* deep yellow, and had black mudguards, springs and frame. "I had it decorated in this fantastic manner to guard against pirates," he explained. "I have lost two by theft, both of modest hue. I hope to be able to trace the next one—at least until they paint it over."

This was not the only ride they took, nor was it the last time they happened together

in the Park. It is remarkable how much two people can see of each other in a city so big that you don't know who lives next door or directly over your head. Both were expert skaters, and, as the season progressed, it was quite the regular thing for them to appear on the roof of the Biltmore, where their figures of eight were the despair of the average onlooker.

Mrs. Montague was no better pleased than was Fred's father with the growing intimacy. She viewed it from the angle that chiefly interested her, namely, that of its effect upon her own life, and pictured all sorts of awkward situations and strained relations resulting from an association of the two families. How could she bring herself to appear at ease in conversation with her old neighbor? He would be drawing comparisons between her present life and the one she might have lived on Fifth Avenue if she had not made a fool of herself on the morning

of the headache. Such considerations far outweighed the question of Helen's happiness. Not that she put it thus, even to herself. On the contrary, she invented elaborate reasons why such a marriage would not promote that happiness, which, she protested, was the paramount factor in her decision. She made the most of the fact that Mr. Newcomb did not favor the match. "How can a girl with any delicacy of feeling," she would urge, "marry into a family that is not ready to receive her with open arms?—*I* should have more pride than to force myself upon an unwilling father-in-law." Now this was a very real objection in Helen's eyes as well, but it made her shrink to hear her mother put it so baldly.

Helen's views and her mother's were widely at variance regarding a young lady's occupation. Mrs. Montague was firm in the conviction that the preparation for housewifery should suffice. "It is not fitting for a young

lady of your social position"—she would begin, at which point Helen would interrupt her with:

"Just what is our social position, mother?" a question her mother found it hard to answer. The Fultons had been "top hole" in Southfield, and she still regarded herself as a Fulton. If they were not "top hole" in New York, she assured Helen, it was only because they had made no effort to push themselves in.

Whatever the final solution of the social question, Helen proposed to take up some definite line of work and study, and her mother at last unwillingly succumbed. About what that line should be, Helen had not a single doubt. Her forte was finance. At school even Oscar had surpassed her in language and composition, but it was to her that the older pupils, indeed, the teachers, turned for aid in the "stickers" inserted, without solution, at the end of Pelton's Problems. Nor was she a mere mathematical

freak, a lightning calculator, for in matters monetary her judgment kept pace with her facility.

According to the terms of her grandfather's will, Oscar's share had been left in trust. To Helen he had left, without restriction, the old home and a generous share of his personal property. The ability to manage it had come to her from the same source. "Just like her grandfather," was the comment at the First National, through which she still largely dealt even after they went to New York.

"Uncle Sam," the cashier, who, far from resenting his nickname, trimmed his beard to accentuate the likeness, was always known to her as "Daddy Sam." He used to tell of his consternation when, in the course of a panic, she passed in a handful of gilt-edged bonds with an order to sell, and to buy Steel common, Pullman and United Fruit. Everybody else was taking in sail. "Why, Daddy

Sam," she had said, in response to his protest, " I don't see anything crazy about it. It is only doing what you men are always preaching, ' Buy when others are selling.' " " And, by George, she had me. A neat thing she made off it, too," the old man would add.

He didn't tell how his hands trembled when he took the bonds, or how his voice choked, or how he gazed at her as upon one who was drifting off on a dangerous sea without rudder or compass; one to whom a rope had been cast, and who had carelessly tossed it aside.

" You may be right, my dear," he had said, " but in these times, in these times—all I can say is, I am frightened, I am frightened."

" Now, don't you worry, Daddy Sam," she had answered. " You know I am going to keep house for you one of these days, and I shall have your salary to live on. So take care of yourself." She reached over and gave his hand a little pat.

"Well, there is this about it," Uncle Sam had allowed. "Your grandfather used to scare me the same way when we were clerks together—he became president of the bank, and here I am on the same old salary."

Under these circumstances it was natural that when Helen made up her mind to take up some study in earnest she turned to banking. For the two years succeeding the accident in the Park she could be seen daily at 8.45 A.M. arranging the papers and sorting the mail at a certain desk in Lamson's bank.

"So far as social position goes, it may be sour grapes," she wrote—rather sententiously, I am afraid—in her diary at about this time, "but I think that what you are doing is more important than who you are." And she was certainly doing things. In the first place, there was her work at the bank, where already she was often called upon to straighten Liberty Bond tangles and income tax details that bothered some of the

young men, but which were " nuts " for her. Then, too, she was taking the chauffeur's night course at the Y. M. C. A., and could drive the yellow car as well as its owner now—and change a spark-plug, too, on occasion. She kept up her music as well. Music had always been Southfield's strong point, perhaps because there wasn't much else to do there. Already in '69 it had sent a notable contingent to the Peace Jubilee. Helen had practiced in the cold parlor, hour after hour, long before she could reach the pedals. By the time they went to New York she was recognized as an accomplished performer, even in Southfield, where everybody could " play piano " more or less. Both she and Fred had good voices, and Oscar complained that they were caterwauling all the time. But Oscar was given to extravagant language.

Helen's mother had been musical, though her ambition had not carried her farther than

the choir of the First Congregational Church. When she heard Fred's tenor blending with Helen's contralto in the " Long, Long Trail " and " Sympathy "—for they did not confine their attention to Rubinstein and Mendelssohn—her thoughts would recur to a certain Sunday morning when an exchange minister from Waterbury had filled the Southfield pulpit. Ordinarily no hymn was sung at the end of the morning service, and on that Sunday, as usual, most of the choir had departed. Only Frederick Senior and she were left. So, when the minister unexpectedly announced that they would sing, in closing, the forty-second hymn, and the congregation turned to face the choir, all they saw of it was one very sheepish looking couple! For once Ruth was so frightened that she forgot to faint.

Helen was not without girl friends. There was Louise Gillett, her roommate at Templeton, who, with her brother, frequently

" played with " her. The brother was devoted to Helen, and made the most of his opportunity when circumstances forced Fred to 'squire Louise.

Fred completed Helen's conquest by remembering that she had a birthday. If the average woman were given her choice whether to have her anniversaries remembered or her expenses paid, she'd doubtless jump at the former and take her chances on the latter. It may be, after all, that she is right. Perhaps those are the things that really count. Anybody can pay expenses—if he has the cash. It takes some effort to remember anniversaries.

So the time passed pleasantly away. The only drawback to their happiness was the attitude of Frederick Senior. But Fred was equally determined, and vowed he'd marry none but Helen, even if his father should disown him—which, of course, he wouldn't. Helen was drifting. It seemed as if she

could not give him up—and yet—suppose Mr. Newcomb was right, and she ought not to marry Fred.

Why not ask Dr. Reynolds?

CHAPTER X

ANOTHER CONSULTATION

Dr. Reynolds lived west of Fifth Avenue, downtown, on the edge of Greenwich Village, in one of a block of four houses. A narrow balcony ran along the front of the block, which was well back from the street, and had miniature lawns in front, guarded by an iron fence. The doctor's lawn boasted a marble fountain, one spray of which was still in working order, and sent a thin stream along the nose of a female figure hard to classify, but which, on account of the constant dripping, would answer, perhaps, to the name Niobe. The house always had atmosphere, now also smells.

A few lonely rays of sunlight had penetrated the maze of chimneys, balustrades and

dormers in time to light up the weather-worn features of the statue when Helen, one morning in early May, mounted the portico steps. A pull at the loose-jointed bell-knob produced, somewhere in the interior, a jangle seldom heard in the city, unless upon opening the door of some obscure and primitive bake shop.

She was ushered in by an untidy maid, and told to take a seat in the hall, the general impression of which was one of lofty ceiling, red carpet and red wall paper. In a dimly lighted corner stood a table of oak, covered by a chenille table-cloth with elaborate fringe; upon it were stacked files of the *National Geographic* and the *Scientific American*, a report of the Home for Crippled Children, and a "Life of Lincoln." Other details she had no time to note, for the doctor shortly appeared with outstretched hands.

"Well, this is a sight for sore eyes!" he cried. "Come right into the back shop."

A faint odor of drugs, mingled with that of ancient dust, permeated the " back shop." The most conspicuous object in the room was a roll-top desk so stuffed with papers and other things—including a winter muffler and a pair of fur mittens—that the attempt to close it had been long since abandoned.

" Now, what can I do for you? " her host inquired, after she had disposed herself in a chair much too deep even for her, but otherwise comfortable, excepting for one broken spring.

" In the first place, I want to know just how serious those attacks of mother's are," she began.

" The ' heart attacks ' ? "

" Yes."

" Why, I supposed you knew. Those are only nerves, not serious at all," said the doctor with a smile. " I shouldn't think of them again."

"Do you suppose Aunt Ellen knew that?"

"Sure. She talked to me about them several times, and in a very disrespectful manner, I can tell you."

"Then she is very cruel," said Helen, shaking her head.

"What do you mean?"

"She used to tell me that they were likely to kill mother at any time, and whenever I did anything naughty she used to make me think it might give her a fatal attack, and I should be practically a murderer. I used to lie awake worrying about that more than any other one thing. She used to try it with Oscar, but he only laughed at her. He had more sense than I did, after all."

"A thicker skin, you mean. It isn't sense that makes the rhinoceros overlook a flea-bite. All the same, the thin-skinned people can take a lesson from the other kind. But

that wasn't all you came down here to see me about—out with it!" cried the doctor.

"I'm worried about Oscar. He is so queer. He thinks people put something in his radiator. Of course, it is sheer nonsense. It isn't simply that he thinks one man plays a joke on him—that woudn't be so ridiculous—but he seems to think there is a sort of conspiracy. He even asked me the other day if I was in it. He is sane enough about ordinary matters. Of course, he is a little wild, perhaps partly because mother has always let him have his way. Does it mean anything serious that he imagines everybody is down on him?"

"Not necessarily," said the doctor thoughtfully. "Lots of people have that idea, and it never goes any farther than to make them miserable. It does seem to go a little farther in Oscar's case, and suggests paranoia."

"Does that mean he will go crazy?"

"Not exactly. Lots of prominent and suc-

cessful people have been credited with a touch of it. Some of them are queer and unreasonable, have peculiar ideas about the world and their place in it, but it may never go beyond that. Then again, sometimes the man who has the ideas takes steps to right his imaginary wrongs—keeps going to law—or, worse yet, takes the law into his own hands and becomes lawless. Let us hope Oscar will stop short of that. He certainly has not shown any tendency that way yet, and I am going to take it for granted that he will not."

"How would you know an out-and-out paranoiac?" asked Helen.

"Well, if a man tells you that the Free Masons, the Odd Fellows and the Cigar Makers' Union have pooled their issues to put him out of business, it is a safe bet that you are talking to an out-and-outer."

"You couldn't give me a simple definition of a paranoiac, could you?" asked Helen,

looking a little puzzled. "I don't mean a text-book definition."

The doctor rubbed his chin reflectively. "Well," he said finally, "here's one I don't think has got into the text-books:

"The paranoiac is a person badly out of joint with his surroundings. He cannot find his place in the band, but wants to play trombone on the drum! He can play trombone fluently, but not in tune. So he thinks the others are making discords to annoy him. If he cannot right these wrongs by going to law, it is a toss up whether he shoots the bandmaster or the drummer. A number of people something like this are still at large."

At this point Dr. Reynolds leaned forward in his chair with both hands on the arms, and said quietly, "Coming now to the main question before the house?"

"Well, it's this way," hesitated Helen. "You know Fred Newcomb and I are practically engaged, but his father objects on

account of my family—I don't mean that it is not good enough, but he has some ideas about heredity. He thinks—he supposes "—and she came to a stop, blushing furiously.

"He is afraid that if you have any children, they wouldn't come up to the mark?" queried the doctor bluntly.

"Yes. And if I really ought not to marry Fred, I shouldn't want to. But I don't want to give him up for a mere notion, if that's all it is; nor from pride, because the question has been raised. That is what mother wants me to do. I don't think it is a question to be decided in any such way. Mother has been talking to me about her own marriage and warns me against making a mistake, but as far as I can make out, the mistake she made was in marrying out of spite."

"And you want an opinion on the heredity question?"

"Yes."

"Then why don't you go to an expert?"

"Oh, you are expert enough for me, and have common sense besides."

"That's one on the experts," shouted the doctor, pounding the arm of his chair. "But if you really want my opinion, I will give it to you for what it is worth. I am not going to guarantee perfect children—the Lord himself doesn't do that with the most perfect parents—and I am not going to say that yours is an ideal family to marry into; but I think there is such a thing as trying to play the game too safe. If you are going to live in this world as you find it, you've got to take some chances; and the chance you are taking will not be worth worrying about.

"If I should call your family ideal it would be pure bunkum, not an opinion at all. But, after all, look at your grandfather—he more than made good. I don't know so much about the other side, but I'm willing to take a chance on the name. How many families do we know *all* about? Anyhow, I take it these

mental traits split up, and even sometimes vanish in time. It isn't like a supernumerary finger. Those are transmitted unchanged from generation to generation, regardless of mingling stocks. Now that's quite a long lecture for me, and I don't know as I have made myself clear."

"Yes, you have, and you're a dear," said Helen, "and I'm a thousand times obliged."

"If you should give him up, after all, just put me on the list. He can't say I haven't played fair."

"I'm afraid you're an old fraud, Dr. Reynolds," said Helen, eyeing him quizzically. "If I should take you up, you would run so fast I should have to start the other way and meet you coming round on the other side."

"Well, you can't say I haven't made a fair offer."

"All right, I'll credit you with that."

"Now, why not consult someone who knows about heredity and such things?"

"That reminds me," interposed Helen. "Fred's father has consulted a specialist, and he put it very much as you have, except that he bore down on my family rather harder."

"Then you don't have to come to a general practitioner for a common-sense opinion after all!" chuckled the doctor.

"No, but Mr. Newcomb thinks this one doesn't know his business. He says, anyway, he doesn't want his son to marry into a defective family," and she added, with something like a pout, "He says my ears are degenerate."

"Hoity, toity! I suppose he wouldn't bite into a nice juicy Mackintosh Red if there was a speck in the skin!" exploded Dr. Reynolds.

"Funny you should have thought of that," said Helen. "Fred says he is always looking for an apple without any specks since he has read Nordau."

"Damn Nordau, if you'll excuse the slang. He seems to have filled the world full of

cranks, whether they were there before or not. How would it do to bring a counter suit, and refuse to marry his son until he recovers his common sense?"

"I'll think it over," laughed Helen, and took her leave. When she went out the whole statue was bathed in sunlight, and the lawn was flooded. She thought this was the dearest spot in the world.

"I wish Fred and I could live in just such a place as this," she said to herself, and almost danced up the street.

When she reached home Annie announced that her brother was waiting for her, with another young gentleman—a foreign-looking gentleman.

CHAPTER XI

THE COUNT

No one knew just where Oscar picked up the Count. It certainly was not in the upper circles of New York society, for Oscar did not move there. Be that as it may, they were now as thick as a barnacle and a ship—and if a barnacle extracts nourishment from the object of its attachment, the comparison holds true, for Oscar paid the bills.

In the early stages of the acquaintance Oscar was glad, even eager, to do this by way of initiation, as it were, into clubship with so debonair a youth. For some time his new friend went through the polite form of having left his pocketbook at home, or having failed of a remittance, but in the course of time, even these subterfuges were abandoned in favor of a tacit agreement satisfactory to the one, and accepted by the other. This

acceptance was favored by the realization on Oscar's part that his friend could make it very uncomfortable for him by divulging certain transactions of his that were not yet matters of common knowledge.

Just where the Count acquired his title was not generally known. Indeed, it was intimated that the diamond pin, the dainty separation of the little finger, and the moustaches turned up like the Kaiser's, were his only patents of nobility. Everybody called him so, however, and Oscar—who was an odd combination of guile and simplicity—really thought he was one.

He was one of those men who look at you as if they were trying to read your thoughts. It may be they are only trying to hypnotize you, or trying to keep you from hypnotizing them; perhaps they have a morbid fear that someone will think them unable to look a person in the eye; or possibly they do it unconsciously, and what you really resent is

that they don't see you at all. But they do it.

Oscar was a pacifist—at least that is what he called himself—and a conscientious objector. Helen was frankly disgusted at his attitude. It was the first time in her memory that he had shown symptoms of a conscience, and this seemed a poor time to begin. Mrs. Montague thought Helen unfeeling.

"Do you want your brother killed?" she complained one day.

"That isn't the question," protested Helen. "The question is whether he ought to do his share or let someone else do it."

"If it was a question of your going yourself you'd feel differently," commented her mother. "As long as it is only your brother you don't care. I think you are very selfish."

"It would be more selfish for me to want to keep him at home," Helen responded.

"Now you are accusing me of being selfish," said her mother in an aggrieved tone,

beginning to show the symptoms of nervous collapse that had taught Helen to discontinue argument.

The Count sympathized with Oscar's views. He defined his own attitude as socialistic, with broadly international leanings. "I don't consider myself bound to any country," he explained to Oscar. "My country is the world, and all men are my brothers. Patriotism is a fetish, and a man is a fool to fight for a country. World government by the workers is the only government I recognize."

"His views don't seem to make him work," commented Helen, to whom Oscar had repeated these sounding phrases, "and he seems to be availing himself of police protection and such other comforts as are provided by the government that happens to be taking care of him. But perhaps he has not perfected all the details of the new arrangement."

"What do women know about such

things? " replied her brother expansively, and the subject was changed.

Sarah McKenzie thought both these worthies wonderful. She was a working girl with social aspirations. Until we were well into the war, and she had a soldier boy to cling to, she was inclined to endorse the principles of both. The Count she regarded as particularly admirable—he did express himself " so beautiful," too. He was a sort of glistening god, and since gods were somewhat out of her reach, she contented herself with Oscar, who was quite mortal. Her mother discouraged the entire acquaintance. " You'd best take up with some good man with a regular job, and be saving your money for fixings, instead of puttng it all on your back and going to tango teas with them friskabouts," was her advice.

Oscar's attitude toward Sarah was characteristic. He fancied that her mother was laying plans to enmesh him. Whether the

aim was blackmail or the altar he was uncertain. Nor could he satisfy himself whether it was an isolated scheme, or part of the general conspiracy with Nicky Bennett at its head. In either case he must be wary. But he could not stay away. He found her a good chum. She was not always nagging him about having no useful interest. She overlooked his lack of the finer graces. She even flattered him by imitating some of his methods, like blowing on his food, snarling at the servants, and suspecting the head waiter, fancying she was learning how things are really done in the higher circles in connection with matters on which her etiquette book was silent.

Oscar's suspicions made him cautious. If he visited her modest home (up Harlem way) he was sure that her mother and a lawyer were in hiding within earshot. He would carefully choose his words so that nothing could be used against him. In a

restaurant he was very careful what he said before the waiters, for any of them might be in the employ of the lawyer. It was only in the yellow car he let himself go. Sarah did not understand until long after why he constantly led the conversation around to Nicky Bennett, and tried to trap her into acknowledging that she knew him.

The Count tolerated Sarah, but looked higher. In fact, he fixed his gaze on Helen, as a cat does her's on a canary. His approach was likewise stealthy. He must not startle her. In laying his plans he did not think of himself as an adventurer. Rather as one who was willing to barter title for fortune. In fact, so accustomed had Mr. Josef Podovik become to the title that he almost thought he had a right to it. Among his pals it was a standing joke that his rich friend on the Drive took him seriously. In the early stages of the acquaintance he had treated Helen with punctilious respect. Then one day he

forgot himself. But he was duly rebuked. Later he played the humble penitent, and finally she made the common mistake of thinking it would do no harm to be nice even to so doubtful a character. What harm could he do her? In fact, wasn't it her duty, so long as his friendship with her brother was bound to bring them into contact, to be nice to him? Suppose everybody decent turned the cold shoulder to such people, how could they ever improve? So she let him make the arrangements for frequent rides with him in the Park, by way of perfecting herself in the art of horsemanship.

What fun it would be to surprise Fred when he came back. He had been sent by his firm to settle an estate in Paris. So far as he knew she was as ignorant of matters equestrian as of the mechanism of the hydroplane. So she made a serious study of this, as she did of everything she undertook. The riding master was astonished at her progress.

Nor did they make a bad looking couple on the bridle path.

Whatever shortcomings were the Count's, he could not be accused of inability to manage a horse. When Helen asked him where he acquired his skill he gave vague answers that might have meant anything from his having been tutor of a Crown Prince to having served his country as a cuirassier—whatever that might be—she liked the word—it suggested nodding plumes and clanking spurs. Anyway, he could ride.

Thus it was, that on the day after Fred's return from Paris, while exercising Prince in the Park, he found himself face to face with an attractive pair whose identity would have escaped him had not Helen nodded gaily. Fred saluted gravely, but made no move to stop. Helen flushed. This was the way he was surprised! Hadn't she a right to ride in the Park? A subconscious realization that she ought to have taken him into her

confidence crept in to disturb her. Was it worth while to have surprised, at the risk of vexing him?

The Count kept up a flow of small talk, to which she made no pretense of paying attention.

"You don't seem to be in the best of spirits," he finally commented.

"Oh, excuse me, please, I'm not very good company to-day. Perhaps we'd better turn back."

Her cavalier acquiesced. Now it happened that the horse he rode that day had quite a reputation, in his way. He was a handsome beast, well bred and well trained. Unusually fast, a wonderful jumper, he would have been a mine of wealth for his owners but for one habit. At irregular intervals, without known cause, he would suddenly become unmanageable by every horseman who had tried the experiment. The Count knew this, but, between his unlimited confidence, and his sport-

ing blood, he had taken a chance. The temptation to make a good showing before Helen was not to be resisted.

Without warning, just at the turn, the expected happened, but no amount of foresight would have availed the rider. He was unable to manage his mount, and, to Helen's consternation, was off like the wind.

Fortunately, Fred not only saw him coming, but knew what had happened. Swiftly wheeling, he gave Prince the word—he did not need the spur—and in the time it takes to tell it was alongside.

"Do you think he will be all right now?" he asked, after things had come to a standstill.

"Sure, and I am much obliged. My fiancée would like to thank you, too," answered the Count, quick to see his opportunity. "Let me introduce you."

"I think I know the lady—it is Miss Montague, isn't it?"

"Yes, here she comes now," and Helen approached, full of fear, and breathless with excitement, but managing her horse—though he also was somewhat excited by the episode—with an ease that Fred had to admire. She reached out her hand. Fred took it without a smile.

"Allow me to congratulate you," was all he said, and rode on.

"What does he mean?" she asked in amazement.

"He congratulates you on your horsemanship, I suppose," was the answer.

"What did he say to you?"

"Just thanked me—or yes, he said, 'It's that Miss Montague, isn't it?'"

"Oh!" And nothing more was said about that or anything else for the remainder of the ride.

She expected to see him that evening, then the next; finally it dawned on her that he was not coming. She was tempted to send

for him. But no, that she could not do. The woman has to wait. Perhaps it was just as well that she had found out now how intolerant he was—and how unjust. So she kept silence. It was fortunate that she had an occupation; otherwise she would have made herself ill, in spite of her good resolutions. The designation "*That* Miss Montague" rankled. It was as if she were some notorious character in whom he took no particular interest. Why did he use this expression? She might have answered her own question by asking another, "Why do we believe everything we hear, especially when it is to our disadvantage?"

It was fortunate for Fred that he likewise was busy. He took up work with redoubled energy.

"We shall have to send you to Paris every year," said the senior member of the firm. "You were pretty industrious before, but now you put us all to shame."

"I wish you would send me to Paris for good," answered Fred, and he meant it! So the season wore on, and the beautiful spring days found him riding alone, or with his friend, wondering, at every turn in the path, why he did not meet Helen with her fiancé. But Helen had no heart for riding; nor did the Count urge it. He knew that he had overreached himself. He had cooked that Newcomb's goose, but had not furthered his own cause at all. On the contrary, Helen studiously avoided him from that day. This was not exactly reasonable, either, she realized. There was no more cause to shun him now than before, but somehow she could not bring herself to be more than barely civil to him. It was not fair, she agreed (in her diary) to blame him for Fred's estrangement, but Fred had her whole heart, even if he did not want it. She did not propose to place herself again in the position of seeming to favor another. Besides, it was not fair to

the Count to encourage him—she had come too near to doing that already!

Another season slipped by. In due time Fred went to Plattsburg, where he applied himself as seriously to matters military as he had to matters legal. She was no more lonely than many another girl. But the others had at least letters—and a star!

Red Cross work was added to Helen's activities. She worked very hard that summer. It was decided, largely on her account, that the family should spend September at the Osborne, the well-known Vermont hostelry. Oscar would condescend to spend a week-end or two with them, but he wanted to stay in town until he had seen a pinch hitter make a pinch hit! This was his sarcastic manner of saying "little old New York" was good enough for him.

What happened at the Osborne is worthy of another chapter.

CHAPTER XII

THE HIDDEN GRAVEYARD

THE favorite exercise at the Osborne was sitting on the porch. Sometimes the guests sat in couples, sometimes in threes. Again, by mutual consent, they formed a circle. The grouping of the empty chairs at the hour—sacred to dressing—that preceded dinner, attested all these combinations. By that time all the chairs had abandoned the linear arrangement of the morning, with the exception of a few near the front door. These were dedicated to certain select, contemplative, but not over sociable, smokers.

Quite a number of guests there were, of course, so vigorous—or so reckless—as to follow the flying sphere over hill and across dale, into bushes, through hazards and out of bunkers, even when the mercury stood at ninety. Helen was one of these. Nor was

she too exhausted after a round of golf to search the woods for Hooker's orchis . . . but no; dates must be respected, even in fiction, or, rather, most of all in fiction. This was September. What blossoms were out were in plain view, covering the fields, and massed along the roadsides. The pink clusters of Joe Pye weed still enriched the drives where automobiles could not comfortably penetrate, and umbrella aster (not always recognized by the occupants of the car) looked over the Virginia fences, by which the automobiles whizzed. Clumps of early goldenrod, long past its time as forecaster of frost, vied in height with the aster, its yellow clusters taking second place only to the rich plumes of its dwarf relative, now scattered freely over the open hillsides.

It was in the course of a botanical ramble that Helen stumbled on the hidden graveyard, a century-old affair, whose charm she found irresistible. There is nothing grue-

some about a graveyard. There may be about a cemetery. It isn't a question of words so much as of dates.

She speedily decided that the arm-chairs of the hotel piazza could not compete for comfort with the long-since flattened mound that covered the remains of Jeremiah Morton, whose end, it seemed, was brought about by an unruly ox, thus depriving his (Jeremiah's) friends of a cherished companion, and the town of " an useful and respectable citizen." The slab (of slate) that imparted this mouldy information had gradually acquired an angle that just fitted Helen's back. Overhead a chipmunk doubtfully eyed her from the branch of a tall pine tree. The modest graves numbered not over a dozen, arranged in two rows, with the suggestion of a path between them. Time had dealt more gently with Mr. Morton's monument than the ox had with his person. His was the only headstone left intact. The others, broken and

tilted at various angles, displayed, upon their moss-grown fronts, only traces of weeping willows, coffins and angels, with here and there a half circle with widely spreading rays suggestive of the sun god Ra.

The whole affair was so diminutive that it might have been put into a fair-sized music room without disturbing the baby-grand. The spot, though within a stone's throw of the State Road, was elusive. A sylvan path, leaving the road at an angle, lured the passerby to investigate, but it soon faded out, and the investigator found himself in a tangle of underbrush. The adventurous, piercing the underbrush, soon reached the little clearing, closely surrounded by the pines and hemlocks whose needles carpeted its floor, and the oaks whose brown leaves rustled under foot. As Helen sat there, enjoying Mr. Morton's hospitality, it was so still she could hear her ears ring. Only the fall of an occasional twig broke the silence that surged

up at her and engulfed her. She was at peace with all the world.

"Wasn't that a heavenly beef-steak?" she heard someone say. "I wonder where this path leads to." The spell was broken. But she came again, and brought her knitting.

It is not to be understood that because she loved such spots, and could amuse herself alone, Helen was scornful of the piazza chairs, and such indoor entertainment as was available at Osborne. On the contrary, she was a very human young person, even if she had undergone a little mental training. She negatived the suggestion that such training fosters self-consciousness and artificiality. She did not stalk through the world with the gait of an Egyptian deity proceeding across the wall of a tomb.

In point of fact the artificiality at Osborne was monopolized by Miss Josephine Kent, who displayed her dimple as a young man "shoots" his cuffs, and who had an animated

look (for those worth while) that caused the professor maliciously to suggest that her pupils were voluntarily dilatable. This was, of course, pure jealousy on his part. She certainly did not dilate them for him. But she did have one tone of voice for her intimates, another for strangers, another for her family, and still a fourth for the servants. Perhaps this was one reason for her not being a general favorite. People will persist in judging us by these little things instead of by our sterling qualities!

There was plenty of opportunity for the exercise of all these graces, and many more, during the memorable storm that visited Vermont in the middle of that September. It rained and blew almost incessantly for three days and three nights, as the soaked links and the broken branches in the driveway testified. The golfers wandered about the house like lost souls. But Helen was radiant. A certain Lieutenant Newcomb, after protracted

silence, had telegraphed, on the third day, with military abruptness that he was starting from Plattsburg for Osborne, and hoped to reach there in the evening. It followed that at ten o'clock she was standing at the edge of the piazza in a mackintosh, peering down the driveway.

"I hope nothing has happened to him," she said. "It's an awful night."

"What could happen to him?" responded her mother, whose worries were somewhat exclusive, "but I'm very anxious about your father."

"Where is he?" asked Helen.

"Why, when it cleared up this afternoon he insisted on walking to Smithtown. He ought to have been back long ago."

"What on earth did he go to Smithtown for?"

"Oh, no matter," answered her mother, reserving to herself the privilege of disapproving her husband's ways.

"Was it for whiskey?" asked Helen, rather sternly.

"I am afraid so," reluctantly acknowledged her mother, and burst out crying.

"Don't cry, mummy dear, it will all come out right," said Helen soothingly.

"No, it will never come out right, and if anything happens to him it will be my fault for letting him go."

"According to that, if anything happens to Fred it will be my fault for letting him come. It will break my heart if anything does happen, but I sha'n't feel guilty."

"You don't seem to have any feelings at all since you took up with that Mrs. Crosby," said her mother reproachfully.

"I don't think they are lost, mother, only misplaced—that is, from your point of view," answered Helen.

"Now you are making fun of your mother; haven't you any sense of decency? When did he start from Plattsburg, anyway?"

"He telegraphed that he would start early in the afternoon," was the answer to the second question. To the first Helen paid no attention, beyond reminding herself that it would once have brought tears to her eyes and a lump to her throat. "I think we might as well give it up and go into the concert," she continued. "It won't bring either of them for us to stand here in the rain."

"You may go to the concert if you can find the heart," said her mother severely, "*I* am going up to the room."

"Very well, mother, good-night," and her undutiful daughter disposed of the mackintosh and wandered into the hall. The concert was over and dancing had already commenced. "I wonder if I *am* losing my feelings," she asked herself, "because I refuse to wring my hands and go to pieces when anything happens."

"May I have a turn with you?" interrupted one of the few youths who, for one

reason or another, had not yet joined the ranks of the combatants.

"I am not dancing to-night," she answered, smiling so pleasantly that he forgot to be annoyed, and she shortly made her way back to the foyer, where she found a copy of *Life,* and took a seat commanding a view of the front door. But after an ineffectual effort to interest herself in imaginary soldier boys, she abandoned herself to thoughts of a real one who was on his way through the storm to Osborne. He had said, "Probably there to-night," so there would be no occasion to worry even if he did not arrive. It would mean that he had stopped off somewhere. There were so many things that might happen—a blowout, an empty gasoline tank—an accident—no, she must not think of accidents, that would pave the way for worry, and that is just what she mustn't do. It was so futile to borrow trouble—there were enough real troubles nowadays.

Her meditations were interrupted by the familiar words, "A penny for your thoughts, young lady."

It was Mr. Tomlinson. Well past the age that in itself excites interest, Mr. Tomlinson conscientiously overcame the handicap by a choice line of anecdotes, of which the headings were safely noted, alphabetically, in a little book he carried in his left-hand upper waistcoat pocket.

Helen looked up, and tried to appear pleased at the gay smile of the old gentleman.

"I really don't know just what I was thinking about," she replied. "Perhaps it was this joke. I have read it twice, and don't understand it yet."

"That reminds me," said Mr. Tomlinson, "of the old lady in the country who was reading the paper to her husband: 'They picked him up a mangled mass.' she read, 'The spark of life was entirely extinct.' After a pause her husband asked, 'Did it kill him?' She

read it over again slowly: 'They—picked—him—up—a—mangled—mass. The—spark—of—life—was—entirely—extinct.' Then there was another pause. Finally she answered, 'It don't say!'"

The narrator looked at Helen expectantly. She had been making a valiant effort to follow the story, but just at this point there was a bustle about the door. She half rose in her seat. It was only the passengers from the late stage.

"Oh, excuse me, what were you saying?" she asked, turning to the narrator with a bright smile.

"Nothing particular," he answered, rather shortly.

"Oh, I'm glad it wasn't anything important," she said, and toyed with *Life*. "Isn't that a funny picture?"

But this sudden show of interest did not satisfy her entertainer, who sauntered quietly away.

"I hope I did not offend him," she said to herself. "I hate to offend anybody." Just then the young man from the concert hall again sought her out: "Do come and dance with me, Miss Montague," he pleaded.

So she decided to make up to the young man for displeasing the old one, and was circling the room in his arms when, unobserved by her, Fred appeared in the doorway. He was tired and hungry, and, if the truth must be told, was just a little disappointed not to have been met on the piazza. Of course, he did not really expect it, but among the many pictures he had formed of his reception this one had loomed large. Perhaps the only imaginable picture he had left out was the one that met his eyes. She seemed quite absorbed in that good-looking boy, who was old enough to be doing sentry duty instead of the fox trot.

It must be acknowledged that Fred's weak point—wherever it came from—was a ten-

dency to self-effacement. A little of this tendency he showed to-night, and, as usual, it made him rather unfair. "Oh, well," he cogitated, "if she prefers that chap's company to mine, I will improve the opportunity to get something to eat and look her up later." So it happened that when she returned to the foyer, the young man for whom she looked was rather savagely munching cold chicken in the small dining-room.

On reaching the elevator, it suddenly occurred to her that she was neglecting her mother, and she rang the bell. She was herself anxious about her father. Of course, when it began to rain again, he might have stopped at a farmhouse which had no telephone, or perhaps he was still in Smithtown, forgetting—for obvious reasons—to telephone. Or perhaps the wires were down. On the other hand, the habits that would make him forget to apprise his family of his where-

abouts might have placed him in real danger. Suppose he had fallen in the road!

She found her mother walking the floor, alternately wringing her hands and pulling her fingers. "Oh, why did I let him go!" she constantly reiterated. "He is killed, I know he is, and it is my fault!" The question whether it was her fault seemed to concern her more than the question of his demise. In point of fact, there had been an armed truce between them ever since Gerrold's effort to have her adjudged insane. Had it not been for the children they would doubtless have separated at that time. It is safe to assume that much of her anxiety to-night was a vicarious atonement for the fact—of which she was dimly conscious—that it would be a relief to her did he not come back at all, provided her hands were innocent of the catastrophe.

"I begged the clerk to send out a searching party," she complained, "but he insisted it

would be foolish. I did get Mr. Doolittle to promise that if he hasn't come back, or sent word, by daylight, he will go out himself and look along the road. You'd better go to bed, and sleep—if you can—I shall not sleep a wink."

"I must go down and see if Fred has come," objected Helen.

"Why, what are you thinking about? It is nearly midnight. The elevator has stopped running by now. You will look queer going down. You go to bed."

"Very well, mother," said Helen, and complied, against her better judgment, and—at the risk of shocking some sensitive reader—it must be added that in the course of an hour she was sound asleep, not to awake until six o'clock the next morning.

Fred, meantime, was looking for Helen. The chicken had worked a complete change in his feelings. Why shouldn't she dance with another man while she was waiting for

him? Probably the other fellow had a good reason for not enlisting, too. Perhaps he was one of those poor devils who wanted to, but were prevented by some disability. Anyhow, he would cut him out with a flourish of trumpets. And he crossed the foyer with fire in his eye.

The concert hall was empty save for a couple of bellboys, who were noisily rearranging the chairs and putting out the lights. Fred looked through the card- and writing-rooms, finally took a turn around the piazza, but no Helen was to be found. At last he resorted to the common-place method of asking the head bellboy.

" She went upstairs while you were in the dining-room," was the announcement. " She has spent most of the evening on the piazza looking for someone. If I'd'a known who it was I'd'a put her wise when you came. I saw her look at the register, but you know you

didn't put your name down when you first came in."

"I've made a muddle of it," was all Fred said, and took the elevator.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SELECTMAN DOES HIS DUTY

The longest night will pass, and this was truly a long one for Mrs. Montague. Struggle as she might to make herself believe that her husband was safe, she could not shake off the thought that something dreadful had happened to him. It was one of those presentiments which occur daily, or, rather, nightly, to those with absent dear ones, but which pass into oblivion unless the dread mishap comes true—as, on the law of chances, it sometimes must.

However that may be, it went down in the family archives, and was related in hushed tones by the nurses of children's children that Grandmother Montague, at just twelve o'clock one stormy night in September, saw her husband lying dead in the road, as plain

as if it was broad daylight—and early the next morning they brought him home.

The searching party started at daybreak, and had not gone far before plain signs appeared that something sinister had happened. The broken branches were unmistakable. Something had been dragged into the woods, and there, within fifty yards of the road, they found the body, face down, just at the edge of the old graveyard.

Helen and her mother were waiting on the piazza. Neither had felt inclined for breakfast, notwithstanding Helen's progress in the art of poise. The rain had stopped and the wind had gone down, but the sun was hidden in the mist. Even in her anxiety Helen could not help thinking that they suggested a couple of fishermen's wives after a storm, as they stood at the edge of the piazza, looking down the road. It was so quiet that she could hear the drip, drip from the roof. As they gazed a man in a pair of clumsy rubber boots

passed them with a glance and trudged off down the driveway.

"You don't seem to care half so much as you ought to," her mother was saying plaintively. "Do you realize it is your own father they are going to bring up that driveway?" and she carefully adjusted her wrap.

Though Helen's own anxiety was intense, she could hardly discuss the academic status of her feelings with her mother, who had never understood her, and who could at any moment calmly state that her feelings were too deep for utterance, then proceed glibly to expound them.

"Are you warm enough, mother?" was all she said.

"I guess so," answered Mrs. Montague. "*I* am too worried about your father to care about my physical comfort," she continued, drawing the wrap more closely about her.

"Why don't you say something instead of looking like a sphynx?" and she turned to

Helen, whose gaze had narrowed. Her mother followed it down the road, and with a smothered cry, " Oh, my heart! " sank to the floor. Helen jumped to prevent her falling over the edge, at that point some six feet from the ground, but before she could reach her, she had disposed herself decorously quite inside the danger zone.

Helen now realized the full significance of Dr. Reynolds' designation of the heart attacks—it had seemed rather flippant at the time—for the exhibition was too theatrical to ring true. She stopped to do what she could, however, and with the help of a bell-boy placed the patient on a steamer chair, in which she lay, moaning and whispering at regular intervals, " Murderer! Murderer! " Perceiving that she needed no further attention, Helen rushed off down the driveway to meet the group of muddy men. Like her mother, she had supposed that they bore a burden, but she soon saw her mistake.

"You have found something?" she asked breathlessly.

They separated, and indicated Mr. Doolittle, the manager, who was bringing up the rear. He nodded gravely.

"Don't be afraid to tell me," she cried. "Tell me quick, I can't wait."

"I am afraid it is your father," was the reluctant reply. "But someone will have to identify him before we can be sure."

"Where is he," she said quietly, "I will identify him."

The silence was so intense that she plainly heard a man on the outskirts of the group whisper to his mate, "Some girl," a tribute to her self-control, of which she did not know whether to be proud or ashamed.

"We had to leave him there to be viewed by the proper authorities," answered the kindly manager, who did not like his task at all.

"Shall I go back with you," she asked.

"No, it will be time enough when he has been taken to the undertaker's."

"There was a man found dead in the woods this morning," announced the round-eyed elevator boy to Fred Newcomb as he came down to breakfast at nine o'clock.

"Do they know who it was?" he asked with a show of interest.

"I haven't heard," answered the boy, "but it was one of the guests. He was walking from Smithtown. They are looking for the feller that did it."

"Did what?"

"Run him down with an auto, dragged him into the woods and skipped," aspirated the boy, bristling with news. "They've been through the machines in the garage, and they think they've spotted it."

"Well, I'm glad I wasn't the guilty party —I came in last night myself over the road."

"Did yer? Hully gee! Lucky you didn't have a yellow car."

"But I did."

The boy stared at him, but said nothing. As Fred left the elevator, feeling as if something cold had been slipped down his spine, a bellboy stepped up to him saying, "Are you Mr. Newcomb?"

"Yes. What of it?"

"The manager would like to speak to you in his office."

Fred's first impulse was to say that he took no orders excepting from his superior officers, but he dismissed it as spectacular, and followed the boy. He carried his head very high, and felt very warm with the realization that the glances cast in his direction were not altogether due to admiration for his soldierly bearing. He hoped that Helen was not there to witness his discomfiture.

"Won't you sit down, Captain Newcomb?" said Mr. Doolittle.

"Not Captain—Lieutenant—second lieutenant," corrected Fred, looking first at the manager, then at another man who sat by the desk.

"I beg your pardon—I ought to have known—I have a boy in the service. This is Mr. Pitkin, Lieutenant Newcomb." Fred saluted gravely. Mr. Pitkin nodded, then drew out a single-bladed jackknife of huge proportions, and proceeded slowly to open and close it, running his thumb along the blade each time he opened it. This manœuvre he kept up throughout the interview.

"In the first place, I want to warn you," began Mr. Doolittle, "that I am speaking now as selectman, and that Mr. Pitkin is town constable, so it is possible that anything you may say will be used in court later."

"What is this all about?" demanded Fred, with an uncanny feeling that he had been through the experience before, and knew just what the selectman was going to say.

"A guest, probably a Mr. Montague, was run over last night, near here, by an automobile, and killed. The body was dragged into the woods, and the driver made off. One of the farmers on the place saw the car, and his description tallies with the one registered under the name of Newcomb, in our garage."

"Montague, did you say—Montague?"

"No, Newcomb."

"But the man who was killed—was his name Montague?"

"As near as we can find out."

"What was his first name?"

"Gerrold—he spelled it G-e-r-r-o-l-d."

"Good God!"

"But you don't seem to realize; they say it was your car that did it. I won't ask you if it was."

"Of course it wasn't."

"But I will ask whether your car is a yellow one, and whether it has a bent mudguard."

"Yes, it is yellow, and has a bent mudguard—another car backed into it on the ferry, and I didn't stop to have it straightened. I was in such a hurry to get here."

"May I ask what for?"

"To see Miss Montague!" He sank into a chair, and dropped his head on his arm. After a few moments' silence he raised it again, and said slowly, "I don't believe there is an officer or a man in the United States Army who would do such a thing!"

It did not sound as dramatic as it reads, but it served to make the manager feel as if he had insulted the whole expeditionary force—which looked to Fred, just then, a long way off. Mr. Pitkin, while no less patriotic, did not propose to let sentiment delay the performance of his duty—or, perhaps, he was afraid it would, for he, too, had a boy in the service. At all events, he made an impatient movement that seemed to say, "Ain't it time

we was doin' somethin'?" The selectman took the hint.

"I am afraid we shall have to detain you pending further inquiry," he said. "It was my duty under the circumstances to notify a justice of the court, and he has ordered an inquest. It is to be held at eleven o'clock this morning. I will drive you over. I should be glad to have you go by yourself, but it is hardly within my province to take that responsibility. Meantime you will be wanting something to eat," he added, his duties as host replacing those as selectman.

"I've felt hungrier," said Fred, attempting a smile, "but I will try to eat something if I may have it in my room. I don't care to exhibit myself in the dining-room."

"Mind if I go with you?" asked Mr. Pitkin.

"Delighted, I'm sure," said Fred, and they bowed themselves out.

The next question to settle was whether to

communicate with Helen, and how. He did not like the idea of presenting Mr. Pitkin's name with his own, and it looked as if Mr. Pitkin was to be his chum for the present. He could write to her. Of course, if she believed the terrible accusation that had been brought against him she would not answer, but perhaps she did not believe it—she ought to know him well enough for that. Just then obtruded itself the tale he had heard a man tell at his own expense at the club one day. It seemed that in his youth he had given away a hat with his name in it. The hat came finally into the possession of a man who attempted a peculiarly obnoxious crime, and ran away, leaving it behind. Fortunately the former owner was at college, and first heard of the affair on his return home for the holidays, before which time the real culprit had been apprehended. "What did people say when they heard of it?" was the first question he asked. "Well," said his friend,

"some people said they always knew you were that kind of a man, and others said they didn't realize you were that kind of a man, but I didn't hear anyone say that they did not believe it!"

Of course, with such circumstantial evidence she must believe it. Nothing but blind confidence in him could stand in the way. Did she have that confidence? He hoped so. At all events, he would write. She could do no more than ignore it. And he wrote:

Dear Helen:

I cannot come to you now. Perhaps I ought not to. But you must know that I never could have done what they are accusing me of. And yet, the evidence looks very strong, and I shall not blame you if you doubt me. If you still believe in me just say to the bell boy "It is all right." I shall understand. And, Helen, I want you to know how sorry I am for you and your mother. I wish I could do something to make it easier for you, but I suppose they will lock me up. I came last night to try and clear up a misunderstanding between us, but that seems very far away now.

Hoping for the best,

FRED.

Annie answered the bellboy's knock. She was in constant attendance upon Mrs. Montague, who was in bed under the care of the hotel physician and his trained nurse.

"Miss Montague has gone to Smithtown," she told him, and the boy left the note.

It was true that Helen, much as she disliked it, had gone to the undertaker's to identify her father. There was really no one else to do it. It was obvious that her mother was not to be depended upon in this crisis. Helen was coming up the driveway when the automobile containing Fred, Mr. Doolittle and the constable started.

"Where are they going?" she hastily asked the clerk who met her at the door.

"It is the man who ran over your father," was the reply. "They are taking him to the inquest."

"But it is impossible; stop them, please."

"The case looks pretty strong against him," persisted the clerk.

"I wouldn't believe it if I saw it with my own eyes," she exclaimed indignantly. "I should think I was dreaming," she added.

"I am afraid the authorities will not let him off without a stronger reason than that," said the clerk, who was a man of prompt decisions, and already had made up his mind.

"Where are they taking him?" she asked.

"To the justice's court at Smithtown.

"Can I have a car and go there myself, right away?"

"Why, yes, if you think it is wise."

"I don't care whether it is wise or not. Order the car, please," and she rushed off to her room.

"Your mother is calling for you, Miss Helen," said Annie, at the same time handing her Fred's note.

Helen read it quickly and tucked it in her waist. "I knew he didn't do it," she said. "Poor Fred!" Then she went to her mother.

"Where are you going?" whispered the invalid feebly.

"I am going to Smithtown," answered Helen decidedly. "They have taken Fred there—they are accusing him of having run over father."

"I knew it! I knew it!" screamed her mother, sitting up in bed with a sudden accession of strength. "He did it on purpose. I know he did. I always knew he would do something to your father or me because we didn't like him. He'll kill me next. I hope they will hang him! There he comes now! Take him away!" and she sank back apparently unconscious.

"You look out for her, Annie," said Helen quietly, and started for the door.

"You mustn't go. I forbid you," cried her mother, suddenly recovering consciousness and sitting up again. "You shameless girl. I forbid your going a single step!"

"You are not yourself, mother, or you

would not talk so," said Helen soothingly. "Try to get some sleep when I am gone." And she went out without waiting for a reply.

"Is it right for me to go, after all," she said to herself when she reached her room. "I wonder if I really am shameless." She felt herself lapsing into her old habit of indecision. "I mustn't do that," she thought. "It is better to make a mistake—I know what I will do; I will ask Mrs. Hannum, and do what she says."

Just as they say a great man always emerges from obscurity to fill a governmental gap, so at every hotel is to be found a Mrs. Hannum. She gets up the picnics, she chaperons the barn dances, she sits up late to make respectable the return of dallying couples. You know what she looks like —comfortably rounded, but not too stout—good-looking, of course; never dancing herself, though often asked, but seeing that others have a chance. That is in peace times.

In war time she knits all day when not running Red Cross. In short, no summer hotel worthy of the name can do without her.

"Of course you are going," stated Mrs. Hannum decidedly, when the case was placed before her. Her own daughters were grown up, and she mothered all the other daughters within reach—that is, all those worth mothering; she could tell them at a glance. To Helen she had taken a particular fancy. "And what is more, I am going with you," she added. So Helen went to the inquest.

CHAPTER XIV

THE INQUEST

When Helen and Mrs. Hannum entered the building to which they had been directed, they were at a loss. Several witnesses were standing about the door awaiting their turn.

"Is it all right for us to go in?" asked Mrs. Hannum.

"I guess so," said one. "You can't do no more'n try." So she opened the door. It was a spring-door with a broken spring. Even her gentle push sent it with a bang against the end of a settee and made everyone in the room look around. Helen had no idea what a court-room looked like. The only picture she could conjure up was one she had seen in the movies, where the elaborately carved chairs of a ducal palace had gradually faded, to be replaced by high-backed mahog-

any ones, arranged about a room with lofty ceiling and paneled walls. They were occupied by dignitaries in wigs, and on the most stately chair, behind a carved and elevated structure of generous proportions, was enthroned the austere judge.

The picture that met her eyes when the door swung open did not resemble this at all. It was a rather small room to hold so many people—not that there were many there, either—only Mr. Doolittle, Fred, the constable, and a dozen others, including the justice (not at all austere, but important looking), who occupied a kitchen chair, only slightly, if it all, elevated above the common herd. He wore a seersucker coat, and had very long features and a bald head. Not that the casual glance disclosed its baldness. What hair there was had been parted just above the ear, so that the lock above the parting (which had been allowed to grow very long) could be trained across the bald ex-

panse, to mingle with its colleagues on the other side.

The most conspicuous object in the room was a stove, whose pipe, suspended by wire loops, wended its angular way to the farther corner, where it pierced the ceiling, to heat in turn an attic overhead. Almost equally noticeable were the two square boxes filled with sawdust and placed directly in front of the row of chairs which held the jury when there was one. The walls were of plaster, painted pink. The floor was still redolent of the morning's scrubbing, and bore two strips of three-ply carpeting with braid along the edge.

The justice greeted the ladies with a gracious smile, and motioned them to seats opposite the jury box. But Helen had no eyes for anything but the prisoner, who stood up and faced her, uncertain how she would greet him, and too proud to make advances likely to be met with scorn. Helen went directly

to him with outstretched hands. "I'm sorry," was all she said, but it was enough. "Helen," he said in a choking voice, and they sat down, side by side.

"You may proceed, Mr. Judson," said the justice, turning to the farmer, who occupied the witness stand on his left, to the rail of which he clung with his bony hands as if he feared that the court possessed some force averse to gravity, likely to send him soaring unless he seized on something stable. He was a big, raw-boned, thrown-together kind of a man, with sparse sandy whiskers, shaved off the upper lip. A large Adam's apple projected well above the paper collar attached to the striped flannel shirt that morning by his wife, despite his protest that he was "goin' to court, not to meetin'." He chewed a parlor-match, which he removed and held by the head, while, with its pulpy end he indicated the various parts of an imaginary automobile.

"I says to him," he went on, "bent yer mudguard, ain't yer?" 'Yes,' says he. 'Curse the luck, I skidded inter a tree.' "Put out yer lights, didn't it?" says I. 'Yes,' says he, 'but praps they'll go now,' "and he turns 'em on. They went all right, so I suspect—"

"No matter what you suspect. Give us the facts please," admonished the Court.

"Wal, I guess that's about all. I says ef I can't help yer I'll be hikin', and I hiked."

"Which way was he heading?"

"Toward the hotel."

"Why didn't you ask for a lift?"

"Wal, in the fust place, he didn't seem over and above sociable. Then I was muddy, and it was a nice car—I cud see that."

"Could you identify it if you saw it again?"

"I don't rightly know whether or no I could—or not," was the answer, delivered in a judicial tone.

"Do you think you have seen it since?"

The witness, overlooking the danger of setting himself afire, thoughtfully scratched his ear with the other end of the match. "I seen a yaller car in the Osborne garage this mornin' that looked mighty like it," he finally stated.

"Are you ready to swear that it was the same one?"

"Wal, no, I don't know's I would. It was a dark night."

"What sort of a looking man was the driver of the car?"

"A ruther tall chap, I sh'd say; dark complected, without any whiskers—or none to speak of," and the witness ran his fingers complacently through his own, glancing meantime at Fred, who instinctively raised his hand to his upper lip, then quickly dropped it, which caused a slight titter amongst the spectators.

"If we can't have silence," observed the

justice pointedly, "I shall clear the court." And quiet ensued.

"Did he wear a uniform?" was the next question.

"Not's I see." And Helen's face brightened.

"Did he wear a cap?"

"No, a soft hat."

"Was the brim straight, or did it curl up?"

"I couldn't jest say."

"What else did he have on?"

"Wal, I sh'd say a heavy gray coat—an ulster like."

The justice turned to Fred, who stood up. "You need not take the stand, but how were you dressed last night?"

"I wore my field hat and trench coat." Helen's face fell. She had hoped he would say he wore his cap.

"Was that the man?" asked the justice, turning to the witness.

"Wal, I wouldn't say he was the spi't an' image of him, for I'd hate to make a mistake, but he's about the right height, and he's dark complected, and he ain't got no whiskers—to speak on."

"What time was this?"

"About ten o'clock or thereabouts."

"You may step down, Mr. Judson. Is the manager of the Osborne garage here?"

"Yes, your Honor," answered a tall, round-shouldered, weather-beaten man with alacrity. He proceeded to the witness stand (with a gait that belied his age) and described with great particularity the car which had been registered the night before under the name of Newcomb, at eleven three. The New York number was 382456. These details he verified from a well-thumbed notebook. The car was very muddy, he testified, but intact, excepting a badly bent right mudguard.

Mr. Doolittle was next called to the stand to testify to the finding of the body.

"It was in a spot about a mile from the hotel," he said, "on the right-hand side of the road as you approach the hotel from Smithtown. A path leaves the State Road at an angle just there, and runs a ways into the woods and peters out in the underbrush. If you push on through the underbrush you come to an old private cemetery. ("The hidden graveyard!" murmured Helen.) "The body had been dragged a ways into the brush and left just at the edge of the line of graves."

"What did you do with it?"

"I left two men in charge, with directions not to let anyone touch it until the doctor got there."

"Is that all you have to tell us?"

"Yes."

"Then you may step down."

"We will suspend until one o'clock," an-

nounced the justice. "This afternoon the physician will doubtless have finished his examination and will give us his report."

"I don't think they will need us this afternoon," suggested Mrs. Hannum, after Helen had said good-bye to Fred, and watched him out of sight with his new friend.

"Perhaps you are right," assented Helen wearily. "I will do just as you say."

"It's bound to come out right in the end," was all Mrs. Hannum could find to say. It did not sound very convincing.

The inquest opened in the afternoon with the testimony of Thomas Gregg. He was a little man with a hook nose and big glasses. His appearance as he bent forward and peered over the witness stand suggested a hawk in spectacles.

"I wuz with the party 't found the body," he testified. "It lay jest to the age of the cem't'ry, 'sif the man had either fell there,

face down, er 'sif somebody'd lugged him there and left him lay."

"And you were left in charge?"

"Yes. Me and Jim Devlin stayed till the doctor come. Him and the undertaker come in Underwood's team."

"Underwood, the undertaker?"

"That's right."

This story was corroborated by that of Mr. Devlin.

The State's physician then took the stand.

"Your name is Joseph H. Stone, I believe," said the justice.

"Yes, your Honor."

"I shall spare your modesty, Dr. Stone, and dispense with your qualifications. I am quite familiar with them. You may proceed at once, if you please, with the report of your findings in the case."

"Very well, your Honor," and Dr. Stone, after detailing the height, general appearance and disposition of the body in the woods,

produced a black rubber coat, much soiled and creased, and lacking one button, cloth-covered (assuming it was like its mates) and black. With it some of the fabric of the coat had been torn away.

"Has the button been found, so far as you know?"

"No, your Honor. Shall I continue?"

"If you please."

Then the witness detailed the various findings, including a seemingly endless list of cuts, contusions, lacerations, abrasions and ecchymoses. "Internal examination," he continued, "showed rupture of the aorta, rupture of the liver, and internal hemorrhage."

"How long did the deceased live after the blow?" asked the justice.

"Death was not instantaneous, though the lesions I have described would have been sufficient to cause death in a short time."

"How severe a blow would be necessary to produce these lesions?"

"Extremely severe. The object that struck him must either have been very heavy, or must have been going with great speed, or both."

"Supposing it was an ordinary run-about?"

"It must have been going very fast."

"Which of the lesions was probably the immediate cause of death?"

"Internal hemorrhage."

"You do not think he died instantly?"

"Probably not."

During this testimony Fred turned pale. The justice proceeded, apparently unmoved.

"How much time elapsed, in your opinion, between the death and your examination?"

"Six hours or more."

"Death might have occurred during the evening before the day you made your examination—that is, last evening?"

"Yes, your Honor."

"I think that is all—unless you have something to add."

"Nothing, your Honor," said the witness, and stepped down.

The justice, without further deliberation, announced that he found probable cause to believe that a murder had been committed, and that there was just cause for holding Frederick Newcomb, Jr., of New York, without bail, for the Grand Jury. He bound over Amos Judkins to give testimony at the sitting of that jury, to be held at the county seat on the first of October next.

The inquest was over. The constable produced a pair of handcuffs, and Fred put out his wrists. He shivered as they were snapped on. It was well that Helen was not there.

CHAPTER XV

THE SILVER MATCHBOX

"It is bound to come out right in the end," Mrs. Hannum had said, but Helen could hardly see how. If the selectman, then the justice, and then the clerk—how positively he had spoken!—took it for granted that Fred was guilty, what hope was there that things would be straightened out by court procedure? She had heard somewhere that the law threw a mantle of protection about the accused, put every obstacle in the way of too hasty judgment, and deemed him innocent until the final verdict was rendered. That might be so, but here were the men who had set the law in motion, obviously condemning the accused just because he had the right colored automobile, with a bent mudguard. So far as she knew, they were not even looking for further clues. She walked

up and down the chamber just like her mother, wringing her hands and pulling her fingers.

Suddenly she seemed to hear a familiar voice say, "What good's that doin' you, or Fred, either?" Then her memory strayed from her mentor to her model. What would Aunt Sally do? Why, she would arrange her bureau drawers! And she went to work, deliberately, and with method.

As stockings and handkerchiefs began to fall into line, her thoughts began to take on orderly form. If the justice should decide, after all, that Fred was innocent, well and good. But if he did not, somebody must take hold. Why not she? She had solved problems apparently as hard as this, and found them absurdly easy. She approached the question as if it was in the back of Pelton's book. How much was known about the case, and how much was surmise? It was known that her father had been run down, and

dragged into the woods. It was practically certain that the car was a yellow one, and that it had a bent mudguard. Which mudguard? Mem. See if the farmer could not remember which mudguard—if the left one, a point was scored.

The farmer had said that the car was yellow. Did he notice whether the mudguards were yellow? If they were, another point was scored, for Fred's were black. By this time she began to feel the glow that always preceded a solution.

Suppose the farmer couldn't remember, or suppose he said the mudguards were black, where was that other yellow car? There certainly was another one. This belief was not drawn simply from blind faith in Fred. Her work in the bank had led her to certain fixed conclusions—rather sweeping, no doubt, but after all, not so far out of the way—which she used for a working hypothesis. One of these conclusions was that people do not often

change their natures for single occurrences. Some people always paid their bills promptly; others *never* did. Some men were always punctilious in their management of affairs; others you could depend upon to take an unfair advantage every time they got a chance. Nobody was first one way and then the other. Fred might run over a man (though the chances were already against that, since he was an exceptionally careful driver), but it would be contrary to his very nature, to say nothing of his training, to drag the victim into the woods and leave him there. If Fred was anything he was law-abiding.

Somewhere in the world, then, there was another yellow car with a bent mudguard. Where? It was a nice car, Mr. Judson had testified. The chances were that it came from a large city. Perhaps Boston. No, people did not travel this way from Boston. Boston people went more to Maine and New Hampshire. More likely Springfield, Hart-

ford, New Haven, or Albany—even New York. New York would be a good place to lose a car in.

What would the owner of the car do? Put it up within a mile of the place of the crime? No, he would want to get as far away as possible before daylight. There would be little use looking for the yellow car in garages within fifty, or even a hundred miles. If it was within that distance it would be stranded in a field, left in a barn, or abandoned by the roadside with its numbers removed, and other marks of identification destroyed. Note. Have the police inquire for a yellow car with a bent mudguard in all garages beginning with New York and working backwards. Note. Advertise for information regarding a yellow car left somewhere unclaimed.

The owner would doubtless get the mudguard straightened, perhaps change the color of the car. Mem. Inquire at the ser-

vice stations regarding repair of a yellow car, or a car whose color had been recently changed. One thing to do then, was to start a detective at work along these lines.

Returning to the seat of the crime, and putting herself in the place of the criminal, she went over each movement required for the deed. He probably took out his handkerchief to wipe his hands. Perhaps he dropped it, or was foolish enough to throw it away with his initials on it. Or he might have dropped an envelope with his name or address. Note. Search the place for clues. She could not do this herself without being conspicuous. She would set a detective on this quest also—IMPY! the very one. Why had she not thought of him before?

Impy was Helen's caddy for the month, and he was a good one, though only thirteen, and small for his age. He looked pathetic trudging over the course with a pig-skin bag nearly as big as he was, in the wake of

one of those players who have to take along every kind of club that ever was invented. But Helen's light canvas bag, and the six clubs—with which she made the course in eighty-seven—just suited him. He had a wonderful nose for golf balls. He could go into a field or rocky place that had been combed by the whole force, and produce a golf ball as easily as Herrman could take a rabbit from a hat. He had done this on a wager. And they had searched him beforehand! She sent for Impy. If he couldn't find a clue it would be because there was none there.

Here, then, were several trails to follow; blind ones, maybe, but any of them better than the trail up and down her chamber, wringing her hands and pulling her fingers.

"A young man to see you," said Annie at an early hour of the morning after the inquest. "He says he must see you alone."

"Very well, let him come into the sitting-room," and Helen, giving her hair a little pat, went to meet her visitor. "Why, its Impy," she said, and put out her hand. "You haven't found something already, have you?"

Impy had a cupid's bow of a mouth, and big, round eyes that he could make look limpid. The ladies always chose him because he looked innocent. Some of the boys looked so tough! You could almost imagine them, when they were alone, saying naughty words! Impy was different. The men knew better; hence his name. When asked how he acquired it, he would say he believed that it was short for Imperator, but he wasn't certain.

Satisfied that they were alone, he drew from his pocket a silver matchbox. Helen seized it eagerly. It was a small affair and contained several of those little "cigar lights" that will burn in the wind. On one side was the inscription

10
S.S.A.A.
'10

of which Helen could make nothing.

" I didn't want the police to have it," said Impy, " and I thought you might like it—to remember him by," he added gently.

" All right, Impy, you're a dear. Leave it here till I think what I ought to do with it."

" I wouldn't do anything if I was you. The police don't need it for evidence. They've got enough—I mean—that is— "

" You are all right, Impy, but I must think." She reached for her purse. " This ought to be worth a good many golf balls," she suggested.

" Oh, no, marm, I don't want your money. I did it because—because I like you," he finally blurted out. This time he didn't try to make his eyes look limpid.

At this point she heard her brother trying to effect an entrance.

"Let me in, can't you?" he shouted, as he banged on the door.

Helen hastily shoved the matchbox into her bag, then opened the door.

"Oh, got a new beau, have you, sis?" said Oscar with a grin, as Impy rose politely and stood at attention.

"Why, Oscar, how can you talk so! And now of all times." Then to Impy, "Well, good-bye, I shall see you again," and he departed, with a scowl at Oscar.

"Where's Mother?" demanded her brother.

"She is in bed. This has been too much for her strength."

"Like her to leave you to attend to things. I got your wire and came right up. I started to come over the road, but the car's a mess. Covered with mud and all banged up in front. So I took the train."

Helen looked at him in horror. The yel-

low car! And all banged up in front. Could it be? Impossible! And yet—Oscar was queer. Was it impossible? Could she free Fred at the expense of her brother? She must tell the truth. But at what a cost! This was a terrible dilemma. These thoughts chased each other through her brain with lightning-like rapidity. But she must decide something. She almost envied her mother the ability to shirk responsibility in oblivion.

"Do you own a silver matchbox?" she finally managed to stammer.

"Of course not; if I had one, you would have seen it."

"Does Mr. Podovik?" she pursued.

"Meaning the Count? Not that I know of. What about it?"

"Do you know where he is?"

"Sure; he has gone to South America. Here is the letter he left for me yesterday." Helen seized upon it.

Dear Oscar:

I have been suddenly called to South America on business I can't explain now. Am sailing in an hour. I must apologize for the mess I have made of the car. Borrowed it for a run to the Adirondacks. Didn't like to disturb you. Skidded into a tree. Pawn ticket enclosed and two plunks will redeem your opera glasses I borrowed.

Yours, J. P.

P. S. I didn't have time to ask you for a loan, so helped myself from the roll on your bureau. If everything works out right, will make my pile and pay you with interest.

A light broke on Helen. "Then you weren't with him," she stammered.

"Of course not. I was at the Sea Gull. If I'd been on the car, do you think I'd'a run it into the tree? Not for Joe! There, I forgot to have them fix it. I'll write."

His manner was so sincere that Helen readily believed him. At the same time, it would be terrible to make a mistake at this stage. She decided not to take him into her confidence about the matchbox yet, but made

up her mind to do a little detective work by herself.

"I must go to New York on the noon train," she said. "I hate to go just at this time, but it is absolutely necessary. You attend to things. I will be at Southfield in time for the funeral."

For a wonder Oscar made himself useful in the emergency, and even showed great executive ability. Arrangements were made for the trip to Southfield, then for the return to the apartment at the Kensington, which Annie was to make ready for them.

The suitcase was packed, the matchbox given to Mr. Doolittle to transmit to the proper authorities, a lunch was prepared, and at noon the train drew out of the station with Helen aboard. She could not rid her mind of the initials S.S.A.A. What could they mean? As the train got under way, the wheels on the rails seemed slowly to repeat them, then faster and faster, till they sang "Esessaya-

esessaya-esessaya." Once the brakes were suddenly applied and said "Ten-ten!"

It was too late to do anything that night except think, and there was nothing more important to think about than the inscription. The initials might mean a name. Some people had four names—she had four herself, though she had discarded a few of them. Others were not so wise. Some of the people she could remember who preserved four were queer ones, but it didn't follow . . . but this was not getting her anywhere. What did the ten mean? That the box would hold ten matches? Absurd. And she went to sleep.

From the time of her early breakfast till the middle of the afternoon, she hardly took a long breath. The first place to visit was Weldon's garage. There was the car, sure enough, covered with mud. The front she could not see, because it had been run into the place head on. She had it moved back, then

carefully scrutinized it. The left mudguard was badly crushed. The next thing to catch her eye was a black, cloth-covered button firmly wedged into the right front spring. To it adhered a bit of rubber fabric.

Her next trip was to the Sea Gull, where she found the waiter who had served Oscar on the 17th, and who told her he would gladly testify to that effect. The manager also remembered his being there. Incidentally, she found that no vessel sailed for South America on the day of the Count's letter.

The first long breath was taken when she settled herself before her desk in the Kensington. There she was idly turning over a pile of old letters when her eye fell upon one written by Fred from Albany. At the top were the initials A.A.A., explained in the letter as referring to the Albany Athletic Association. A.A. stood for Athletic Association. But what had the ten to do with it?

Podovik—ten. The Count—ten. THE COUNT! *It was on ten that they gave him the count!* She reached for the telephone.

"Give me Broad 12340, please. . . . Hello, is this Lamson's Bank? . . . Can I speak to Mr. Paul Lamson? . . . This is Helen Montague, Mr. Lamson. . . . Quite well, thank you, but in a lot of trouble—my father has died. . . . Thank you. I don't know of anything you can do, but I want to ask you something that may sound queer. You know all about Chicago, and what I want to know is whether there is an athletic association there with the initials S.S.A.A. . . . South Side. . . . Much obliged. . . . Good-bye. . . . Hello, Central. Give me the Western Union, please. . . . Is this the Western Union? . . . I want to send a telegram to the South Side Athletic Association, Chicago."

The answer came as a night letter:

Helen Montague, 338 W. 105, N. Y.

Josef Podovik entered sparring match Feb. 9, 1910. Was knocked out in first round. Athletic instructor states friends presented him silver match-safe as booby prize.

LUCAS MARTIN, Sec.

She had solved the problem.

The Newcombs, meantime, had come to the Osborne. Frederick Senior met Oscar in the foyer. "Where is your sister?" he asked. "I have a message for her from my son."

"She has gone to New York," was the answer. "I showed her a letter I got from the man she's engaged to. It said he was going to South America. She grabbed it, said she must go right to New York—and took the noon train. That's all I know about it—except—she had to give him a matchbox or something."

"When do you think you will see her?"

"Said she'd be in Southfield for the funeral. Shall I give her the message there?"

"No matter about the message," said Mr. Newcomb. So this was Helen's answer to the question Fred had come to Osborne to ask!

"I am going to take a trip to Rutland," Helen told her mother after the funeral.

"What for?" asked her mother suspiciously.

"To see the Attorney General," was the answer.

"Is it about that man?"

"Yes, mother. I think I can satisfy him that Fred is innocent, and put him on the track of the one who did it."

"But he is guilty; I know he is. I forbid you going!" and she showed signs of rising agitation.

"But let me tell you what I have found, mother."

"I don't care what you have cooked up to get him off. I will not hear of it. If you

go, don't you ever come back. I shall disown you for an unnatural daughter."

"But, mother, surely you are not in earnest."

"I was never more in earnest in my life. I have made a good many mistakes, but this time I know what I am about. I do not wish to discuss it any longer. Take your choice between your mother and a murderer."

"But it is my duty to go, mother, and I must."

"You owe no duty to your mother, I suppose."

"Why, but mother, this may be a matter of life and death. Please listen."

"I won't! I won't! Annie, Annie, my heart!" Helen started toward her, but her mother waved her away. "Annie, Annie, I want Annie," she reiterated. "You have killed your mother!"

"You'd better go, Miss Helen," said Annie.

"She'll be better when you're gone." And she went.

"I will turn the proofs over to the State's attorney who has the case in charge," said the Attorney General. "He will send a detective to take the affidavits. You may leave the telegram, please; also the button and the letter."

"You will send me word when he is freed?" she asked.

"Surely. Wouldn't you like to visit him? He is at the jail in Rutland. You will be glad to give him the news."

'I may be foolish about it," said Helen, "but I'd rather not see him until it is all settled. If I did, I could not keep still about it, and I don't want to raise his hopes until there is no shadow of a doubt."

"I don't feel as if there was any doubt, but you may be right. Steps will be taken to find and extradite Podovik."

'I don't think I should trouble about South America," suggested Helen. " It's none of my business, but I believe he is in this country. Probably in Chicago. That is where he lived before he came to New York."

" I'll tell them to take the hint," said the Attorney General, and he smiled as he escorted her to the door.

When the State's attorney took the matter in hand he speedily discovered that the government had no case against the suspected man. Assuming, in agreement with Helen's proposition, that the driver of the automobile would put as many miles as possible between him and the place of the crime before daylight, he was not surprised to find that reëxamination of the farmer revealed discrepancies in the identification of the car. He remembered distinctly that he had come upon the car from behind, and had gone around it in front, before he came upon the injured mudguard, which was, therefore, on

the left. The same witness finally remembered that he had recognized the color of the car by the headlights shining on the guards, the rest of the car being in darkness. The State was left, then, even aside from the positive evidence Helen had collected, with nothing further against the prisoner than that he happened to be travelling toward the Osborne at about the time the crime was committed—in a car which did not correspond fully with the description given by the witness who was on the spot directly after the occurrence.

So Fred joined the expeditionary force after all. But his exoneration and release did not convince Mrs. Montague of his innocence. On the contrary she regarded the whole affair as a juggling with justice at which Helen had brazenly connived. Her sentence of banishment was not mitigated for some time, and Helen went to Southfield.

CHAPTER XVI

BACK AT SOUTHFIELD

Uncle Sam was low in his mind. He was tired. Not that he minded being tired; he had often been so before. But this time he realized that it was because he was growing old. He had done this so gradually that the realization of it took him by surprise. Other people had known it for some time. They had noticed, also, one or two little peculiarities of which he was not aware. His face had lost some of its alert expression—appeared as if ironed out. He sometimes seemed a bit tottery. In rising from his chair he would sometimes rock back and forth before he got upon his feet. But his mind was as clear as ever. None of the directors distrusted his memory, or doubted his ability to transact the business of the office; but they did talk

about a vacation of indefinite length without reduction of salary.

It was in the late afternoon, the dull time of day at the First National. No patrons were about. The bookkeeper was scratching away at his desk. Uncle Sam was standing at his post, scorning to take the seat behind him. That would be as unseemly in his eyes as to read a novel in business hours. But he did let his head drop for a moment on his hand, and allowed his mind to dwell upon the dark side of his situation. Most of his contemporaries had passed on. Even Mrs. Wilcox, his landlady, was growing old.

Uncle Sam's whole attitude—the thin white hair straggling out between the thin white fingers—the droop of the narrow shoulders, all expressed dejection.

"Hullo, Daddy Sam!" He raised his head with a slightly dazed expression that speedily gave way to wonder. "Why, bless

my soul! If it isn't Helen Montague. Where did you come from, child?"

"From New York; and for good."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I'm fired."

"You don't mean that you've been turned out of the bank?"

"No, out of the house. Seriously, Daddy Sam, mother has sent me off, and I'm going to live in the old home."

"Alone?"

"No, with Aunt Ellen and you. You know I have always said I was going to keep house for you sometime. This is the time; so pack up your duds this very night. I've got a room all ready for you. You can have grandfather's desk. I will make the peace with Mrs. Wilcox. And I understand you are short-handed here; perhaps you will let me help. I've learned a thing or two that may be useful. Anyway, I can run the adding machine. What do you say?"

Uncle Sam tried to say something, but couldn't. He looked at her with tears in his eyes and a droop in his lower lip. But he packed up his duds. And she was assigned a desk.

The directors, who had followed her progress with interest, jumped at the chance of getting so able a co-worker. The Second National would have to look out for its laurels now.

The news spread quickly. Everybody seemed to have a deposit to make next day. There was a boom in the Liberty Bond business; and from that time the list of patrons in the First National steadily increased.

The young president, Mr. Walter Phelps, was skeptical at first, though glad of the extra hand. He pooh-poohed when, at the end of the second week she advised them to go slow with the big loan to the Consolidated Connecticut Realty and Mortgage Company. "Feels her oats a little," he suggested to Mr.

Jones, the old director, " because she has been in a New York bank—takes us for Rubes."

" It will do no harm to stand them off for a few days, and write to Lamson's Bank," said Mr. Jones, and the president reluctantly assented. He came to know Helen better before long, and when, six months later, the Connecticut Consolidated went into the hands of a receiver, he was not surprised.

Mr. Phelps and Helen were both devoted to golf, and might have been seen almost any day in the season, after banking hours, running out to the Country Club, either in her car or in his. People began to link their names together, and to smile knowingly as they passed. But the president knew better. Good chums they were, but she showed him plainly from the first that sentiment was not to enter in. She could not forget Fred, though he seemed to have forgotten her. She had learned, indirectly, that he had gone to France—and she couldn't even wear a star!

She had expected him to fly to her the minute he was free, or, if his military duties prevented that, to write. But no word from him had come. Even if he had ceased to care for her, he might at least have thanked her. She didn't understand it. His father, too, or surely Aunt Sally, should have shown some sign of appreciation. Besides a nice motherly letter from Aunt Sally, expressing sympathy for her bereavement, she had heard nothing from either. What did it mean? For once her mental vision was at fault. It never occurred to her that they did not know the part that she had played in Fred's release. Nor did she realize that Fred had received no answer to the question that brought him to Osborne—had, indeed, been led to accept as a fact her engagement to the Count.

She was more than once tempted to write for an explanation. But pride stood in the way. She had done her share. If they did not appreciate it, or if they were unwilling to

acknowledge the obligation, it was not for her to remind them. The more time elapsed the more impossible it became for her to take the initiative. Then, too, the situation was complicated by the attitude of Fred's father. Even when Fred was seeing her almost daily she had questioned whether she ought to marry him against his father's opposition. Why, then, follow him up when he held himself aloof? Had he, perhaps, come around to his father's way of thinking, and decided to give her up without the courage to tell her so? Thus matters drifted.

But she had passed the stage of tears and wringing hands. If one life was denied her she would live another. Meantime the army needed socks and sweaters. Instead of making circles in her lap she made them, with busy needles, in the air.

At this period in her progress she made an important discovery, namely, that efficiency is doubled by dismissing worry. She

was surprised to realize how much more could be accomplished by confining her attention to the task in hand, postponing solicitude for the next until its turn. She was still more surprised to find how fresh she was under these conditions, even after a trying day. Everybody else knew this already. The trouble is that almost everybody forgets to put the principle into practice.

Aunt Ellen had reformed. From the time she met her niece at the station with a bear-hug, her every look and every tone was one of affectionate understanding. Annie, too, was a comfort.

"You have got to let me stay," she had stated when Helen demurred. "I am too old to begin all over again. Your mother gave me a month's wages, and told me not to come back. She said I reminded her too much of you!" So Helen kept her.

Mrs. Montague gradually modified her attitude toward her daughter. At the same

time, having once done her an injustice, she still nourished the grudge such conduct often entails. She had asked her, rather perfunctorily, to return. But Helen, while not bearing her ill will, was too agreeably settled in her new home to leave it. Both her mother and Oscar came frequently to Southfield. It was during one of these visits that another tragedy in the family caused the renewal of Helen's old relations with her mother.

This was how it happened: Oscar had put up his car the night before at the garage around the corner. Many things during the day had annoyed him. His temper, never of the best, had become unruly. The katy-dids, too, had interfered more than usual with his sleep. His nerves that morning were on edge. It was in this state of mind that he went directly from the breakfast table to the garage.

"Hello, Oscar," was the friendly saluta-

tion of a thin-faced man in oily overalls who met him at the entrance.

Oscar looked at the speaker sharply, in doubt of his identity, and suspicious of his motive. The voice had an unpleasantly familiar sound. At this point in his cogitations the man in overalls, evidently embarrassed, inserted the little finger of his left hand into the orifice of his ear and violently agitated it. Now Oscar knew! How often he had seen Nicky Bennett do just that! And how he hated it, and everything else associated in his mind with Nicky Bennett! So Nicky was working in a garage. That settled it. Oscar's suspicions were not nonsense.

"Hello," he finally responded in a sullen tone, appearing not to notice the outstretched hand freshly wiped on a handful of many-colored waste.

Nicky flushed and proceeded unwittingly still further to justify Oscar's suspicions. He

began quietly to fill the radiator of the car behind whose wheel Oscar had ensconced himself. He paused a moment in the operation to insert his little finger again in his ear. Oscar remembered how he used to wish he'd shake his head off doing this, and that it would fly away. And as it went flying through space he'd like to send a nice icy snowball after it, with a stone inside, that would give it a perpetual sore nose! This beautiful dream never materialized. If anything was ever stuck on tight it was Nicky's nut! The dream recurred to him now, and entranced him. As he dreamt, he turned the switch and pressed the starter, forgetting for once to test the gear-shift to insure neutrality. It happened that the gears were in mesh—first speed ahead. The car sprang forward. Oscar jammed down clutch and brake, but not in time to prevent the car from crashing through the wall, at that place, fortunately, a thin one of tile. Nicky, al-

ways on the lookout for this catastrophe, sprang aside in time to escape being pinned in the debris. Oscar backed the car slowly out of the opening and brought it to a standstill. Nicky approached and put his hand solicitously on the wheel, upon which Oscar drew a pistol from his hip pocket and leveled it at his head. For this Nicky was not prepared—perhaps he took it for a joke. If so, he quickly saw his mistake. On catching sight of the dilated pupils, he cried:

"Good God! Look out!" But the pupils narrowed, and Oscar pulled the trigger. An explosion—Nicky fell forward, then sidewise, landing partly on the floor and partly on the running-board.

"There goes a tire," chuckled old Cy Baker, who was filling a tank outside.

"He hypnotized me, damn him!" was all Oscar said as they led him away.

"And I thought he was a pacifist!" said the manager.

CHAPTER XVII

AN EXPERT IN CRIMINAL JURISPRUDENCE

"THERE are several games you can put up," said the Count thoughtfully. "In the first place, you can deny the killing. That is no go in your case, for they've got the goods on you. That leaves only two things; one is to claim unconsciousness, the other is to acknowledge the act, and let the lawyers put up the defence of insanity. Not to claim it yourself, mind you. You must insist that you are not insane, and let others do the arguing."

The Count had served his year in Vermont for manslaughter. On learning of Oscar's plight he hastened to Southfield to give him the benefit of his learning. His confinement, while too brief for the sin he had committed, was long enough to further his education in matters immoral.

"The unconscious dodge," he continued,

" has some things in its favor. In the first place, there is considerable in the medical literature to back it up—all about double consciousness, you know, and double personality. The trouble is they don't put doctors on the jury, and experience shows that you can't put this defence over. They are wise to it. There was a chap tried it in New York State—killed his wife and skipped. They caught him the other side of Chicago and he claimed he didn't know anything about it—came to himself on the train and didn't know how he got there. First degree for his. I guess the chap *was* unconscious that killed the boy and buried him in the cellar, because he left one hand sticking up in plain view—though he may have been just foxy. But if he was unconscious, it was because he was drunk, and that don't help you, so long as you took the stuff on your own. That's the dope. They told me about one chap who gave the whole snap away. He went to

Oregon from East somewhere, killed a man and came back East. After he was caught, he seemed to come to himself, and said the last thing he remembered he was in Pennsylvania, a month before—never had been west of Chicago in his life. Perhaps he could have put it over, but he changed his claim to self-defense. When they asked him how about the unconscious business, he said another prisoner put him up to it—told him it was easy."

"Of course, you can try this if you want to, but my money says it's no go. That leaves you the insanity defense. I honestly believe you are more or less of a paranoiac—I've been reading a lot about that."

"Do you mean I'm crazy?" stormed Oscar.

"Just crazy enough to be irresponsible when it comes in handy," replied the Count. "It's a cinch. All you've got to do is to let

your damn'-fool notions loose for the trial and can 'em when you get in the bug-house."

"But they're not damn-fool notions!" shouted Oscar.

"'Sh, not so loud," cautioned the Count. "I don't care what you call 'em, so long as you work 'em right. After a while you can say you've given up all those ideas—about Nicky Bennett, you know, and all that."

"But they are not ideas," protested Oscar. "They are so."

"All right, let it go at that, and lie about 'em. It won't be the first lie you've told in your life." Then, after a pause, "I can see you won't have to fake much for the trial. Just stick to it you had a right to kill Nicky—the Lord told you to, or something like that. It will help you if you can describe it calmly, as if it was all in the day's work. Nine out of ten people judge others by themselves, and reason this way, 'He must be crazy to do such a horrible thing and talk about it so

coolly.' If only one man on the jury thinks so, you will get a disagreement, anyway. Of course, if this works, it's the asylum for yours. That's better than the chair, especially as you stand a chance of getting out later."

"But what good will it do me to get out if I have to go all through it again?" asked Oscar.

"That's the fun of it. They can't put you twice in jeopardy of your life. Don't you see? Then there is another thing. You must claim you know all about the law, and could run your case better than the lawyers."

"I could," muttered Oscar. "They are a lot of damn' fools."

"That's the stuff," cried the Count approvingly.

"But I tell you it's so," insisted Oscar.

"I told you all you had to do was to act natural," commented the Count. "You'll get off like a breeze. The trouble will be when you want to get out of the asylum.

You won't be able to keep your mouth shut. Oh, there's one other thing. Do you know the association test?"

"No," said Oscar sullenly.

"Well, it's this way: The doc will give you a word—for example, 'chair,' and you are supposed to say 'table,' or something else that 'chair' suggests to you. He times you with his watch; perhaps it takes you two seconds to get out 'table.' Then he gives you a lot of words, and all of a sudden he says 'pistol,' or something like that. If you're innocent, you're supposed to get a word to match 'pistol' as quick as you have the others; but if you're guilty, you're supposed to take longer to think it over—perhaps ten seconds. That's Munsterberg's test. It might have been all right if he'd kept it to himself, but publishing it put it on the blink. I suppose that's the German of it. They used to practice on it up where I was."

"What's all that got to do with me?"

growled Oscar. "I thought you came up here to help me, instead of mixing in all that tommy-rot."

"Well, go it your own way, and good luck to you." And the Count took his leave, making way for the Honorable Litigus Broadview, who had just been announced.

The sweeping assertion has been made that all lawyers, and all experts, should be thrown in the discard as untrustworthy. In point of fact, both may probably be divided, like the bulk of mankind, into three classes, namely:

1. Honest.
2. Pretty honest.
3. Dishonest.

Then there is another class, namely:

4. The Honorable Litigus Broadview (first cousin to Dr. Medicus Broadview, and Messrs. Chirographus Broadview and Real-estatibus Broadview).

In the case of the Honorable Litigus, it was not a question of honesty. It was a ques-

tion of belief. The presentation of one side of a case sufficed in his case to establish a belief that nothing could shake. There was only one possible view to take of such a case. Whoever took the opposite was either a scoundrel or a fool. All witnesses whose testimony upheld that view were worthy of credence—all others were perjurers. His cross-examination was conducted in accordance with this conviction.

One of the first steps in the defence planned by the Honorable Litigus was to secure the services of Dr. Knoworthy, to whom he would leave the selection of another expert, with the suggestion that Dr. Reynolds, the family doctor of the Montagues, would be quite satisfactory. Of course, he could not know much about mental diseases, but with Dr. Knoworthy to assist him, they would do very well.

Dr. Reynolds was duly notified, and arrangements were made for an interview be-

tween these two physicians and the Montague family. This interview proceeded along the following lines:

Dr. K.: "Can you tell us about any peculiar actions of his childhood?"

Mrs. M.: "Why, yes; in church he would sometimes be so quiet that I would know he was up to some mischief, and when I looked around I would find he was kneeling on the seat and making faces at the people behind."

Dr. K.: "What kind of faces?"

Mrs. M.: "Funny faces—would make them laugh."

Dr. K. (writes busily in note-book, and reads as he writes): "Funny faces—make them laugh. That is the sort of thing we want. Anything else?"

Mrs. M.: "One night he took a sheet—or blanket, I forget which—and fixed one side of it to the fence, and the other to the ground, and slept under it all night."

Dr. K. (incredulously): "All night?"

Mrs. M.: "Yes, all night."

Dr. K. (writes rapidly, and reads): "Sheet or blanket—all night. Anything else?"

Mrs. M.: "I don't think of anything particular just this minute, but he was queer in many ways."

Aunt Ellen: "How about the singing?"

Mrs. M.: "Oh, yes; he used to wake us up early in the morning singing in bed."

Dr. K.: "At what age did he commence this—paroxysmal singing?"

Mrs. M.: "Perhaps eight or ten."

Dr. K. (writes, and reads): "Paroxysmal singing—eight or ten. It looks like a case of dementia precox, but we must not make up our minds too hastily. We must weigh all evidence carefully before making up our final opinion. (Turns to Helen.) Perhaps the young lady can help us—she must have seen a good deal of him when they were children."

Helen: "I don't know anything about the singing—or the faces—or the camping out. I shouldn't think they meant much—all boys do such things."

Dr. K.: "Ah, my dear young lady, you are doing just what I have been cautioning against—you are drawing conclusions. Let us have the facts, please, and we doctors will try to draw the conclusions."

Helen: "But Oscar did have queer ideas."

Dr. K.: "Ah, good. Let us have them, please."

Helen: "He wouldn't let them fill his radiator at the garage, because he thought they put something in the water; and he thought the janitor of the Kensington did the same thing. He seemed to think there was a sort of conspiracy against him. Once he asked me if I was in it."

Dr. K.: "Ah, now we *have* got something. Perhaps, after all, the other things

are not very important if you do not regard them so—you know better than we do what young people are doing. Anything more along those lines?"

Helen: "Yes. There is a Sarah McKenzie, who lives up Harlem way, with whom he used to associate, but he was always very cautious what he said to her, because he thought that her mother and a lawyer were in hiding to get evidence against him. And when he took her to a restaurant, he thought the waiters were all spies in Mrs. McKenzie's pay, so he was very careful what he said there, too."

Dr. K.: "Do you know her address?"

Helen: "Mr. Podovik would know it."

Aunt Ellen: "If that sort of thing is important, I can tell you a lot. He used to talk to me quite freely about these things. For instance, he thought this very Nicky Bennett was at the bottom of all his troubles, although Nicky was probably never in New York in

his life, and couldn't have known all these people if he had been. I never paid much attention to his talk—thought it was just nonsense, and let it go at that. I did ask him once how he supposed Nicky could have anything to do with Sarah McKenzie. He said he couldn't quite understand it himself, but Sarah had a necktie like one Nicky used to wear, so there must be some secret society with the necktie as a badge."

But we need not prolong this interview—suffice it to say that plenty of evidence was forthcoming that Oscar was peculiar—morbidly suspicious, and a victim of persecutory delusions.

"Well," commenced Dr. Knoworthy, after they had retired to consult, "that is what I call a pretty clear case of paranoia. You know what that is, I suppose, Dr. Reynolds?"

"Yes," answered Dr. Reynolds. "I have

known about these ideas for some time. I have always regarded him as paranoid."

"Ah, very good. We shall be quite in accord then. I will let Mr. Broadview know that we are both ready to testify that he is insane, and irresponsible."

"Hold on a minute," interposed Dr. Reynolds. "I said he was paranoid—I didn't say he was irresponsible. A man may be insane and yet be responsible."

"How do you make that out?"

"Why, as I understand it, the courts want to know something else besides whether a man is insane. For instance, if the question is raised whether a man is capable of making a will, they inquire whether he knows all about his property, and his relatives, and their claims; and whether he has the proper degree of judgment to dispose of his property. A man may be technically insane, and yet be all right on these points—hence, make a will that is valid. Similarly, in the case of mur-

der, what they want to know is whether he understands the difference between right and wrong, and whether he is capable of refraining from doing wrong. A man may be insane, and yet know that—in other words, be responsible."

"Then you think Montague was responsible?"

"I am inclined to think he was. Up to the time of the shooting he conducted himself, notwithstanding his queer ideas, so well that it wouldn't have occurred to anyone to commit him, and I don't feel inclined to commit him now simply because he has shot the man. It seems like eating your cake and having it, too."

"Well, I will report to Mr. Broadview, and he will use his judgment. I hope he will be able to size up the case better than he did you—he said I should have to coach you."

Dr. Reynolds smiled, and seemed to appreciate the compliment.

When the report was made, Mr. Broadview was delighted. "I quite agree with you that the singing and all that does not amount to a row of pins," he commented, "but the delusions settle it."

The experts who examined on behalf of the government agreed with the view of Dr. Knoworthy, and the case was quickly settled. The order of commitment was signed. Oscar was officially insane.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE QUESTION OF A LICENSE TO KILL

"I CONSIDER that a fair disposition of the case," said the judge to one of his cronies some six months later, "in spite of certain sarcastic comments that have come to my ears. The only weak point is the question of the permanency of his detention in the hospital. I have sometimes wished that we could give these paranoiacs their choice whether to be regarded as sane and responsible, or insane and irresponsible, with the proviso that if they chose the former they should take the consequences of crime along with other sane people. I believe there would be fewer murders in the world. But we can't move real men about as we do chessmen. There is one thing we can do, though, and that is, after letting a man off for murder on

the ground that he is a paranoiac, see that he doesn't have the chance to try it again. Otherwise we are only issuing a license to kill."

"To let such a man out again is to give him a charmed life," he continued. "When he committed a crime it would be like committing a crime in his dreams, only to wake up with a sense of relief. Of course, it is not ideal to wake up in a hospital for the insane, even temporarily, but most people would prefer it to finding themselves in the chair, or at the end of a rope."

These remarks were occasioned by certain rumors that had come to the judge's ears regarding proposed attempts to have Oscar released from confinement, on the ground that if he had been insane, he had now recovered.

Nor were these rumors altogether groundless, as evidenced, for example, by the following conversation which took place in the office of Dr. Reynolds:

"I understand," said Mr. Broadview, looking around for an unoccupied space to hold his hat, and finally depositing it upon the floor, alongside the seat with the still broken spring, "that you were not convinced that young Montague was insane. Now I have here a list of some twenty people who knew him for longer or shorter periods, all of whom are ready to testify that they never saw anything out of the way with him. I have also interviewed one of the physicians at the hospital who says he doesn't see anything the matter with him—thinks he is unusually bright. I have talked to Oscar, too. He says he did have those notions, but he has given them up."

"But I did not say I considered him sane," interposed the doctor. "I said I thought he was responsible, although he was not sane, but paranoid."

"Yes, I know," assented the lawyer, "but what I am coming to is this: I suppose we

could rely on you to help us if we should try to get him free. Whatever his former condition, he is all right now."

The doctor smiled. "And when he saw his eyes were out, he scratched them in again. Is that the idea?"

"It is not a matter to joke about," interposed the lawyer severely. "The question is whether this poor fellow, who is to-day as sane as you or I, shall spend the remainder of his days incarcerated with a lot of gibbering idiots," and he warmed to his subject, "never again to look up at God's blue sky, excepting through the cruel bars. . . ."

"I thought they gave him the run of the grounds," interrupted the doctor.

"You take me very literally," said Mr. Broadview.

"I am looking for the facts," replied Dr. Reynolds dryly, "and so far as I am concerned the facts are these: If he is sane to-day, he was sane when he shot the man. In that case he got off very easily, and I

don't see my way to help reduce his punishment to nothing."

"I should like to go into the question further," persisted the lawyer. "As I was saying when you interrupted me. . . ."

"I'm afraid you will have to pardon my interrupting you again," said Dr. Reynolds, rising from his chair. "I know you are a busy man, and I don't feel justified in detaining you any longer."

And the lawyer took his leave.

At about the same time another interview was in progress between Helen and her aunt.

"I think it is a shame to keep him in that place any longer," said Aunt Ellen. "He has paid over and over for killing that fellow. Just think of the thousands of better men who have been shot in Europe, and nobody even asks who shot them. Anyway, he is perfectly sane, and I don't believe he was ever anything else."

"But, Auntie, how could you reconcile that with what you said to the doctors?"

"I never said he was insane. I only answered their questions. You wouldn't want me to lie about it, would you? They asked me if I had ever known him to do queer things, and I had. All boys do queer things —you said so yourself."

"But you certainly gave the impression that you regarded him insane," persisted Helen.

"I can't help your impressions. The doctor called you down for drawing conclusions instead of sticking to facts. I stuck to facts. I know what I said and don't take anything back. People may draw any conclusions they like. People are so unfair, they would do it anyway. . . . Aren't you going to do anything to help your brother, if they try to get him out?"

"I don't see how I can. I have always considered him queer, and I told the doctors so. I don't see how I can take it back now."

"And let your own brother stay in that place the rest of his life?"

"But he put himself there by what he did. It was a question of that or something worse. I don't think it is my duty to commit perjury to get him out. And when all is said, I believe if he came out he would do something awful. Do you realize that it is just as great a responsibility to let him out as to keep him in?"

"What I do realize is that you are a very sophistical young lady. . . . Think of his mother."

"Think of Nicky's mother," responded Helen.

Mrs. Montague had gone over the arguments so many times, and was so torn between her desire to help Oscar and the inner conviction that he was where he should be, that her head swam and her ideas became confused at the mere thought of reopening the subject. And she reopened it a hundred times a day. She was surely to be pitied. Oscar's career was the one thing on which she had set her heart.

CHAPTER XIX

MR. MARCHMONT'S STORY

MR. ELSON MARCHMONT, of Rutland, Vermont, lawyer by profession, had a reputation as a raconteur. He was at his best in the club, with a highball at his side, a panatella between his fingers, and a circle of appreciative listeners. To-day he was guest at the Southern Club, of New York, and his host had passed the word to a few choice spirits that he was in an entertaining mood.

"What shall I tell you about?" he smilingly inquired as they gathered about him.

"Oh, any old case," was the answer.

"All right," agreed Mr. Marchmont after a moment's reflection. "I'll tell you the story of an affair that came into my bailiwick when I was State's attorney. The case is disposed of now and there is no impropriety in my retailing it. I will name it—

THE TRAGEDY OF THE HIDDEN GRAVEYARD.

On the main highway, somewhere in Vermont, or, to be exact, just beyond DANGEROUS CURVE and this side of OILZUM, may be seen, neatly painted in black letters on a white board, the legend—

PARTICULAR PEOPLE DINE AT THE OSBORNE,
ALSO ANTIQUES.

Likewise might have been seen, had it not been so dark, one stormy night in September, nineteen hundred and seventeen, a long, low, yellow racing car rapidly approaching the intersecting road whose corner bore the sign. The sole occupant of the car was a gilded youth, known in the shady quarter of New York as the Count. The owner of the car, a friend of his somewhat higher in the social scale, was spending the week-end at a seaside resort. So, since delicacy forbade disturbing him, the Count had quietly borrowed it for a run to the Osborne, interesting to him on account of harboring the sister of his friend.

The friend remained, therefore, in blissful ignorance that his car was otherwise disposed than in the farthest corner of Weldon's Garage on 96th Street, between a flivver and a Packard, at the rate of twenty-five iron men per month, exclusive of wash and polish.

Wash and polish it would surely need after this night's run, for the going was awful! It had rained almost steadily for three days and three nights. The roads were bogs, and —in the hollows—lakes. The woods were soaked; the brooks were rivers. But the car tore on, rocking from side to side of the winding road. More than once it narrowly escaped landing in the ditch, its safely largely due to the fact that it had the road—such as it was—practically to itself. The windshield was a'drip; seeing was mainly guesswork. On nearing the Osborne, he rounded a sharp curve at top speed, his mind on the juicy steak now not far away. As his headlights swung into line, they lit up the rubber coat

of a tall figure plodding along in the middle of the road. The machine swerved abruptly to the left and collision would have been averted had not the pedestrian lurched in the same direction. The impact of car and man jerked the wheel from the driver's hands; the car bumped over the prostrate form, almost turned turtle, swung half-way round, and came up, with the unmistakable sound of a crunched mudguard, against a tree.

This was a new experience, even for so accomplished a man of the world as the Count, and his knees shook as he stepped—almost fell—from the running-board. Prepared as he was for the emergencies of metropolitan life, even in the shady quarters, this crude happening jarred him. His first impulse was incontinently to depart, a temptation quickly discarded upon the reflection that the next automobile to pass would put the police upon his track. Here were no obscure streets and favoring alleys for a getaway. These con-

siderations, not Samaritan impulse, led him to study the body which lay, still and crumpled, in the middle of the road. Not a soul knew that he was in this part of the country. If he could win back to New York and return the car to the garage, no one would be the wiser. Arguing thus, he switched off his lights. Then, without stopping to assure himself that the heart was no longer beating, he laid hold of the inert mass and dragged it from the road. He found himself in a woodland path which shortly ended in a tangle of underbrush, into which he penetrated a short distance to drop his burden, as it chanced, at the edge of a little graveyard, to which, a century ago, the path had led. Once in the road again, he breathed easier; then he felt rather than saw, a man standing by the car.

"Hello, there, somethin' happen t' yer?"

"Yes," promptly answered the Count, as he wiped his eyes (this was the sort of emer-

gency he was prepared for). "I nearly skidded into the woods." Then he added with a show of candor, "I am afraid I was going faster than the law allows."

"How d'yer bend yer mudguard?"

"Skidded into a tree, curse the luck."

"Put out yer lights, didn't it?"

"Yes, but perhaps they will go now," and he switched them on.

"Wal, unless I kin help yer, I'll be hikin'," and the farmer squelched off through the ooze. As his form disappeared in the gloom, the Count swore under his breath, then proceeded to apply his mind to the situation. The farmer probably could not identify the car; he certainly could not have taken the number, so he should worry! But he must turn round, and he did so, feeling meantime for his matchbox, to quiet his nerves with a smoke. To his dismay it was missing. He must have dropped it in the woods, but to hunt for it would be futile. He must take a chance.

Before he had gone a half-mile on the way back to New York, he was stopped by a lantern swung back and forth directly in his path. He did not dare do anything but stop, though his first thought was of the police—an idea he quickly discarded—muttering under his breath, " What is this, anyway—a boulevard? What is everybody out for this particular night? "

" Give us a lift, will you? " said a rollicking voice from the road. Not venturing to refuse, he opened the door and made way for his unwelcome passenger.

" Going as far as Smithtown? " " Yes."

" Then you may drop me there, if you don't mind. I'll be everlastingly obliged. I was beginning to wonder if I could make it. Some night, what! I can understand Noah's feelings when he saw the waters rising."

No answer.

" Sociable ride we are going to have, I can see. Mind if I smoke? "

"No."

"I'm a traveling man—automobile supplies—nothing doing in my line around here —'specially these times, but somebody's got to cover the route. Know this part of the country?"

"No."

"They told me it was only a mile or two to Smithtown from Osborne, and, like a fool, I started to walk it. I'm a pretty good walker, and I'd rather walk that distance than make 'em get out a car this weather. I've got a tin Lizzie myself I left at Smithtown to have the radiator fixed. Pretty dependable car, after all, the Ford. Ever hear about the Victrola in the show?"

No answer.

"Well, the other makers had their new cars ready for the exhibit, but all the Ford people had was a space with a talking machine in the middle of it, with a big sign, "FORD." When the show opened, the machine began

and kept up all day, ' Get you there—bring you home. Get you there—bring you home.' Pretty good, what!"

No answer.

"Everybody knew what a Ford looked like, so all they had to do was to remind people what it would do, see?"

No answer.

"Oh, well, no matter, perhaps it never happened." And the traveling man subsided until he was dropped at Smithtown. "Good-bye," he said, as he stepped from the running-board and slammed the door. "Much obliged. Hope you don't get laryngitis talking in the rain." And the yellow car sped on with no further adventure until it brought up, the following day, in Weldon's garage.

Now it happened that a certain young lieutenant had left Plattsburg that very day to visit the same young lady. His car also was yellow, and had a bent mudguard—result of a collision on the ferry. Late that night he

put it up in the Osborne garage and went to bed.

The next morning the body was found and proved to be that of the young lady's father. The lieutenant was haled into court, or, rather, the inquest, where he was found guilty of murder. At this point I was called upon. Not to magnify my own perspicacity, it was speedily brought out—with the help of the young lady—that the government had no case, and the young man was promptly discharged from custody, with apologies.

The young lady, incredulous of his guilt, had been doing some detective work on her own account. Without detailing the methods by which she reached her conclusions, she became satisfied that it was her own brother's car that had run down her father. This put her in a dilemma until her brother turned up with an alibi. She then suspected the Count. To verify her clues, she departed for New

York the day after the inquest, at the risk of missing her father's funeral.

At this point, a stout gentleman, with a square head and strong face, who had followed the story closely, nodding approvingly from time to time, suddenly started up. "What's that?" he exclaimed.

"I said she went to New York to verify her clues."

'Oh, excuse me," said the interrupter. "I was so interested that I forgot myself. Please go on."

"There isn't much more to the story. In New York she found her brother's car, with a button from her father's mackintosh caught in the spring. Greatly to her relief, she also verified her brother's alibi. She would not have to sacrifice brother for lover! Then, by a neat bit of investigation, involving the translation of a cryptic inscription on the matchbox (which, by the way, she had found in the woods and passed over to us), pinned

the crime so conclusively on the Count that all we had to do was to arrest him in Chicago, where she told us we would find him. He has now served his term for manslaughter.

"As an afterclap to the tragedy, the young lady's mother accused her of inventing evidence to free the man who killed her father, and promptly disowned her. . . . Have I earned another highball?"

The circle gradually dispersed, leaving the stout gentleman motionless in the arm-chair, with his head on his breast. It had sunk lower and lower during the recital. Mr. Marchmont shortly made an excuse to return. "You seemed interested in my story," he said, "and now that I get a good look at you, I believe I have seen you before. Is it possible that you are Mr. Newcomb?"

"I certainly am. And, what is more, I am a very much ashamed Mr. Newcomb. . . . To think I believed she went to New York to meet that man! And she was working for my

son all the time. I might as well make a clean breast of it," he continued. And, without sparing himself, he told the part he had played in the estrangement of the couple. " I don't deserve to have her for a daughter," he concluded. " But if I don't it will not be my fault." Then he went to the telephone. Fred was not in his office, so he had to content himself with leaving a message for him to call up the house on his arrival.

He next telephoned the Kensington. Helen, he found, did not live there now—was at Southfield. Ordinarily deliberate, almost ponderous in action, he jerkily made his way to the desk and asked for the Dial. The next train for Southfield would leave at 2.30. He barely caught it. " Charge it to the Club," he shouted to the driver, and rushed across the station. Was this the staid and self-assured Frederick Newcomb?

His taps on the arm of the Pullman chair were not of the usual measured variety, but

quick and irregular. His movements were abrupt—precipitate. As he tapped, he went over the whole story. How he had told Fred Oscar's story, losing nothing in the telling. How he had emphasized the fact that she left him in the lurch to go to her "Count"—had not even taken enough interest to congratulate him on his release. "It is a case of all things to all men," he had said. "Undoubtedly she was fond of you, just as she was of young Gillett, and for aught I know, half a dozen others. But it is evident that the Count has the right of way. All you have to do is to keep a stiff upper lip and forget her."

Fred had acquiesced, at least to the extent of going to France without communicating with her. But he had evidently not forgotten. How subdued he had been since his return!

When Mr. Newcomb reached Southfield he went directly to the Fulton house.

"A gentleman to see you, Miss Helen," announced Annie.

"Why, it's—" she exclaimed, just as she had once before. She did not finish the sentence, but put out her hand.

Mr. Newcomb, for once, was almost disheveled. His eyes glistened as he took her hand in both his own. "You dear child," he began. "How we have treated you!"

"How so?" she asked—though she knew very well what he meant—as they stood in the middle of the room, he still clasping her hand.

"After what you did. I only heard about it to-day. Why didn't you tell us?"

"Why, it wasn't anything," said Helen, with pardonable hypocrisy. "Sit down, won't you?" And her visitor gradually composed himself.

"Of course, it's too late for you to marry Fred. He isn't good enough for you. None of us are—except my wife, she has always stood up for you. But if you could only forgive us!"

"Why is it too late?" she asked archly. "Am I too old?"

"Would you really, after all?"

"Of course, I would—if he wants me," she answered in a low voice, without looking up. Then she blushed.

"He never wanted anything else. It has all been my fault. I know better now. He will come as soon as he gets my note."

"Won't you have some tea?" asked Helen, suddenly remembering her duty as hostess.

"No, thank you. I must catch my train back. I haven't even told my wife." He kissed her. Suddenly she remembered. She raised her head and held him off at arm's length.

"Did you know," she demanded, "that my brother killed a man, and is in the asylum?"

"What of it?" replied Mr. Newcomb. "No family is perfect. We can't give up

the wedding bells for a little thing like that. There is such a thing, you know, as too much caution," he continued, not realizing that he was using the very words of his better half, to which he had taken exception. "Personally, I am in favor of taking some chances."

"The car is ready if you are going to take that train," interrupted Aunt Ellen, and he took his leave.

"Are you sure I am not too degenerate?" she could not help saying as they walked to the car.

"Is a four-leaf clover degenerate?" he countered gayly, and waved a good-bye.

How the evening passed she hardly knew, but at ten o'clock Fred had not come. It was a mild moonlight night. The katy-dids were disputing in the elm trees. She could not go to bed. Fred might come even now. She would not make this mistake again. So she went out to the summer house. An hour later she was almost dozing when she heard a

tenor voice softly chanting a familiar song.

. . .

Fred had been at court all the afternoon; when he returned to his office he found his father's message. When he had read it, he called up the house.

"She is waiting for you," said his father, after detailing what he had learned that day. He might get there by ten, possibly earlier—his car was still at the door.

It took some time to get out of the city, but once on the road, he ate up the miles. The throbbing cylinders said, "Helen! Helen! Helen!" The tall trees stalked by, whispering, "Hurry! Hurry!" The lights in the farmhouses gradually disappeared below to appear above and finally go out altogether.

It was nearly eleven when he turned into Elm Street. The Fulton house was dark. He would have to wait till morning.

He put up his car at the Main Street garage, then went to the Newcomb house.

The old caretaker met him at the door. She had supper ready, but he could not eat. He certainly could not sleep. He would walk in the garden. For some time he paced restlessly up and down the moonlit path by the wall. Finally, he paused at the old arch, now almost overgrown by crimson ramblers. He stood with his hands on the gate, gazing into the other garden. It was Helen's garden! Perhaps she had been there that very day! And as he gazed, he found himself softly singing:

"There's a long, long night of waiting,
Until my dreams all come true."

He started. Another voice had taken up the refrain—

"Till the day when I'll be going down
That long, long trail with you!"

"Helen!" he cried, and demolished the ramblers. The last words of the song were inaudible. She was in his arms. The katydids kept right on!

CHAPTER XX

IN CONCLUSION

THE rest is a matter of history. How, after the wedding breakfast, Frederick Senior and Helen's mother (the latter evidently preoccupied) held hands and swung them back and forth while they sang "Keep the Home Fires Burning," Seriously Sarah beating time with a parasol.

How Uncle Sam put on a blue swallow-tail coat and gave an imitation of leading an old folks' concert, with the metronome ticking on the piano.

How Mrs. Hannum came all the way from Baltimore, was given the best spare room, and had Annie specially detailed to wait upon her. How Aunt Ellen and Mrs. Crosby "joshed" each other as they helped set the tables, and how Aunt Ellen said, "Hang the arm, I believe it is well," and reached down

the gold-rimmed china set without even getting up in a chair!

How the detective in charge of the presents was cautioned not to let any one guest take more than a pound from the big box of Vermont maple sugar, on which was laid a card, with fancy edges, bearing the names of Amos Judson and Samuel Pitkin.

Last, but not least, how Impy (the latest addition to the staff of the First National) lofted an old shoe with such accuracy that it landed right on the radiator cap of the brand-new runabout (not a yellow one) as it sped up Elm Street on its way—whither only the best man knew.

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